

Liz Norell - You are listening to Tiger Stories, a podcast from Chattanooga State Community College. This is the place to share the stories from our community, with our broader community. At Chatt State, we believe every member of our campus, students, faculty and staff belongs here and because we know that belonging matters, we are excited to share the stories of those who make up the unique, diverse and supportive community on our campus. You will often hear people on this podcast talk about Chatt State as having a feel of a family. We are so proud to be part of an institution that welcomes people from across the community to come here and pursue their dreams. We hope you will enjoy hearing our stories and maybe even some day, you will want to share yours with us too.

Nicolas Mansito - Hi everyone. I am Nick Mansito and I teach English at the Main Campus at Chattanooga State. Two of the main reasons I love working here is I get to work closely with our Latino students through LASO, a Latin American Student Organization and with our creative writing students through the Creative Writing Club.

Liz Norell - Without further ado, let's get started with today's conversation.

Nicolas Mansito - Alright, so, hi Taylor, thanks for coming.

Taylor Kennedy - Hi glad to be here.

Nicolas Mansito - I am sitting with Taylor Kennedy today, could you please introduce yourself to us.

Taylor Kennedy - I am Taylor Kennedy and I am an employee at Chattanooga State, I work in Financial Aid in the ESC.

Nicolas Mansito - Okay and you were student as well, right?

Taylor Kennedy - I was, I graduated last May.

Nicolas Mansito - Okay great and so what do you do here specifically at Chattanooga State for work?

Taylor Kennedy - I do anything that has to do with admissions or financial aid, so the student comes in and has a question, why has not my financial aid processed or what else I need to turn in, I would be the one they had to talk to.

Nicolas Mansito - Okay great thank you. So why do college feel like the right choice for you?

Taylor Kennedy - At first, it did not. At first, I just wanted to be done with school because I hated high school and then once I started coming to Chattanooga State, it felt like a home because I was a student worker here as well. So, once I started doing my student worker stuff, it just kind of all fell into place like I just had to be here.

Nicolas Mansito - Okay and so what were you doing as a student worker?

Taylor Kennedy - I started out in new student admissions and financial aid when Keisha and Brad everybody in orientation are recruiting and they were upstairs in the student center. So that is why I started and then I just kind of went with them. So, I have been in Financial Aid since I have started here and I am also a tour guide.

Nicolas Mansito - Well so how long have you been here from student to transitioning to employee.

Taylor Kennedy - Probably, two and a half, three, maybe three and a half years.

Nicolas Mansito - Okay and so you said you did the student tours.

Taylor Kennedy - Yes.

Nicolas Mansito - So tell me a little bit about those.

Taylor Kennedy - So, at first I was terrified to do them and then likely Dale, he went to financial aid and so he had to train student workers to start giving the tours and he picked me, so I was like okay and at first like I said I was terrified and then somebody Kelly Graves I remember us telling her about it, she said if you mess up, they do not know, just keep talking because what you are telling them they have nothing, they have no idea what we are talking about. So just act like you know you are talking about it, so yeah.

Nicolas Mansito - That is funny, yeah, right they do not know what is going on, that is great. So why do you think Chattanooga State was the right school for you?

Taylor Kennedy - I really was not sure. I was stuck between here and UTC and I decided to come here because one of Tennessee Promise and two because I was offered the student worker position and so then after that I guess that I just loved being here.

Nicolas Mansito - Yeah so you got some opportunities you could take advantage of here right. Do you mind talking a little bit more about for people who do not know what the Tennessee Promise is, like what Tennessee Promise is and what are your experiences with the Tennessee Promise was?

Taylor Kennedy - So my experience with Tennessee Promise is not very good. I lost my like after the first semester because of something, I do not know what happened, but some kind of verification issue and I am assuming that is what it was and then, but it was fine because I had financial aid, I had other financial aid to cover me, but Tennessee Promise is a last-dollar scholarship and so what that means is if a student is fully eligible for federal aid like Pell Grant then Tennessee Promise would not have to pay out unless it has to and a lot of students do not realize that, so.

Nicolas Mansito - Okay great, well thank you for telling us that. Could you describe a time when you felt like you truly belong to your Chattanooga State and you could speak as your experience as a student and as an employee if you want?

Taylor Kennedy - I would probably say like when I was a student worker probably had a good time. There are so many different times I would say, probably when they have me go for tours or when they asked me to start doing tours as a student worker that is when I realize okay they believe in me, they trust me and so I kind of felt like little family, well it still feels like a little family where I am at now. I would not want to leave my department. I love everybody in there.

Nicolas Mansito - Alright, great and we are glad that you love it here. What meaningful relationships have you formed with people on this campus because it sounds like you have carried these relationships over initial relationships as a student that have transferred or carried over as an employee too, you talk a little bit about like which maybe is the most meaningful or couple of meaningful relationships you formed?

Taylor Kennedy - So I do have a couple of relationships that you know that are formed, the one that has I should say the two that have stayed with me from the time I step foot on this campus to this day, would have to be probably Vicki Duncan and Kelly Graves. They have been like my go to people for anything whether it will be about school, personal issues, just advise, just somebody to talk to if I was bored, it would always be them. I do not know what I would do without them. Those two relationships are probably the most meaningful ones to me.

Nicolas Mansito - Okay great, thank you. What are some of the most important things you have learned while you have been here at Chatt State?

Taylor Kennedy - The most important thing that I have learned is something that I live by to this day, it is all about who you know versus what you know and I have realized this because of all the relationships that I have made here on campus and even before I have started as a student worker as an employee like it just happen because of who I knew.

Nicolas Mansito - So what came out of these relationships in specifically?

Taylor Kennedy - Well my boss Nale Scott, he was my boss as a student worker and then when he went to be a success coach, Keisha became my boss, so that is a good relationship. I guess that Vicki and Kelly great relationships right there.

Nicolas Mansito - What did you learned about yourself then?

Taylor Kennedy - I have not yet [Laugh].

Nicolas Mansito - Well let us see, so you said originally you were really worried or anxious about doing the tours right, why were you nervous?

Taylor Kennedy - I did not like speaking. I did not like public speaking at all and then once I start giving the tours and talking in front of little groups of people, I was able to start talking in

front of big groups of people. There is this one time I was asked to do a panel with the student government. I do not know what its name was, but it was in front of all the faculty and staff Chattanooga State in the gym and I was terrified because it was so big and there was so much I wanted to say, but I totally forgot and I felt so bad, but I still get really nervous but it is not as bad as it was.

Nicolas Mansito - But here you are now right on the mic. Right.

Taylor Kennedy - Yeah here I am now.

Nicolas Mansito - So what did you learned about yourself through that experience?

Taylor Kennedy - I learned that if I cannot get too comfortable because if I get too comfortable then I just stay around that or else if I have somebody there to push me to do something new or push me into a different direction to kind of test my limits or whatever then I will do it and then I will be comfortable doing what they tell me to do.

Nicolas Mansito - That is great so could we say that being here at Chattanooga State challenged you to get out of your comfort zone in a way?

Taylor Kennedy - Yes exactly that.

Nicolas Mansito - Yeah alright great. I am out of my comfort zone right now today.

Taylor Kennedy - Yeah.

Nicolas Mansito - It is kind of nervous being on the mic. Well that is great. So what advice would you give other students, either students here know or people who might be thinking about coming to Chatt State and you could speak from your perspective as a student and an employee too if you want?

Taylor Kennedy - I would say my biggest piece of advice is to get involved because if I went and got involved, if I would not started as a student worker, I would just came here, went to class and gone home, I would not be where I am right now. I would not be here so that is my biggest piece of advice to get involved.

Nicolas Mansito - Yeah that is great advice to get involved. There are so many things to get involved with here on campus. I am assuming it obviously sounds like you are happy here. So are you happy getting involved like specifically maybe things you have not mentioned yet that you have been involved.

Taylor Kennedy - I have just been a student worker. I did not really have time to do a lot of clubs like too many of those because of classes I did not want to take on too much so.

Nicolas Mansito - Yeah well working. Were you working full time?

Taylor Kennedy - I was like full-time student worker so yeah.

Nicolas Mansito - Which is how many hours.

Taylor Kennedy - You cannot do more than 27 hours a week.

Nicolas Mansito - Well though 27 hours a week and then on top of that, how many classes were you taking?

Taylor Kennedy - I was always full-time.

Nicolas Mansito - Always full time too, well yeah, so you do not have time for anything right?

Taylor Kennedy - Yeah now not back then I did not.

Nicolas Mansito - Yeah alright, right. So how do you feel now like free time wise or time wise, do you feel less constrained or less busier?

Taylor Kennedy - I am still very busy. Yeah, I am still very busy because I am full-time student right now as well.

Nicolas Mansito - Okay.

Taylor Kennedy - So it can get a little crazy.

Nicolas Mansito - Yeah so you working full time and student full time.

Taylor Kennedy - Yes.

Nicolas Mansito - Wow, okay, yeah you are very busy. Well thank you for coming and taking the time.

Taylor Kennedy -Yeah, no problem.

Nicolas Mansito - I know you are busy, cool. Stay that busy.

Taylor Kennedy - Yeah.

Nicolas Mansito - Thank you, thank you so much for coming.

Liz Norell - Those of us who have the honor and privilege to work on Chattanooga State's campuses know that something really special happens here. And it's humbling to get to share a few of those special things with you, our listeners. So thanks to you for joining us here today and a special thank you to the students, faculty and staff, who make this podcast possible. If you are a student at Chattanooga State and you want to be on Tiger Stories, let us know. You can get in

touch at the email address in the show notes. We'll be back soon with another installment of Tiger Stories, until then, make it a great one.

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