

[Music]

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. A Chattanooga 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, who make up the unique, diverse and supportive community on our campus. You will often hear people on this podcast, talk about Chattanooga state as having the 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 someday, you want to share yours with us too. I am Liz Norell, and I teach political science on the main campus of Chattanooga State. I feel so lucky that I get to be on this campus, working with our students and my colleagues on the faculty and staff. We get to witness powerful transformations happening on our campus all the time and so I am excited to get to share this conversation with you without further ado, let us get started with today's conversation. Introduce yourself.

Oscar - My name is Oscar. I am 23 years old and I'm majoring in medical assisting over at TCAT and I am the TCAT Chattanooga president and the State President.

Liz Norell - What does it mean to be president of Chattanooga TCAT?

Oscar - So for the skills officers, and we were just people students that just decided to be a part of it. It was originally, but during the orientation week, we were pulled to the auditorium where the gymnasium and Dr. Barrett along with the advisors, Mr. Mercer and Mrs. James I came and spoke about what a little bit about what Skills USA is and they just, it was an open invitation for all the students to come and be a part of it and so we were just a handful of us who came over and just wanted to be, want to get on the boat so.

Liz Norell - What is Skills USA?

Oscar - So skills USA is this organization that is made up of students and faculty, and that is all across the nation and it is really just a way in which not only companies, but you know, employers, I get in touch with students and their teachers and just organize and see in a way they are like, bridge the students with the employers and build up their skills so they can become professionals.

Liz Norell - What kind of skills do you focus on?

Oscar - Many skills, so there is personal skills, there is workplace skills, so some of which, that we have had like training on or just like teamwork skills. So being able to understand that, you know, not in the real world, we are going to have to work with plenty of people and so just getting along with people being friendly and having that open communication, and also personal skills so just gauging where you are knowing your limits and being able to present that to your employer.

Liz Norell - Interesting.

Oscar - Yeah.

Liz Norell - What do you feel like you've gotten out of your participation and skills USA?

Oscar - I would say it is still pretty early on this my first semester, but

Liz Norell - And you are president?

Oscar - Yeah, I just, I do not know It is a at first and when I was first gaining some, just some insight as to what it was, it was, it seemed like a lot, but luckily, with our advisors, and also with the other students, we are all taking it step by step and so there is, luckily there is that guidance, and it is just, just being able to present and to be the best that you can.

Liz Norell - Cool. So you are in the medical assisting program.

Oscar - Yes.

Liz Norell - What made you decide to go into that field?

Oscar - I have always been interested in the medical field coming out of high school, I wanted to be a personal trainer, and I thought for sure that is what I was going to do. I wanted to help people get to their fitness goals, but just over time, I realized that I just wanted to do something more and I understood that if I wanted to have a family in the future, and I wanted to provide more to them. So, I also saw early on at that time, there were some issues with the family, and we went to a local hospital and we found that there were not people that spoke Spanish. There were some documents that were not available in Spanish so I had stepped in and I kind of helped translate what was, what was going on there and so seeing that medical field with a personal trainer and seeing the medical field, how there is like a, sometimes there is like a little difficulty there with Spanish. I want it to help that and so being in the medical field, being a medical assistant, I want to be able to be there in a clinic and hospital and help if there is ever that situation help patients feel more comfortable if they do not feel comfortable speaking English if it is not their first language.

Liz Norell - So what is the curriculum of medical assistants? I do not know anything about this field.

Oscar - It is a good one. We are finishing up our first semester and includes like, medical terminology. We have so much by structure and function, there is vocabulary words that we need to learn and memorize like part you know parts of body you know, the bone know what this crack is, what this you know like whole it like what, what goes on aware, it is a lot of anatomy and physiology, which I took previously on the credit side. So it was a bit like a, like a fresh up on what I already knew, but there is also just what it is like the distinction between a medical assistant and a nurse, and knowing our role and knowing what our limits are, and just, you know, preparing us for that whenever we are in the field,

Liz Norell - What will you do that is different or distinct from nurses?

Oscar - So, from what I understand it.

Liz Norell - And that is okay, I know this semester is a final exam, Oscar no one, told you.

Oscar - So I understand that we as compared to nurses, we do have that hands on with patients, but the level is more nurses can dictate more to us and they can help us more. They can tell us more on what to do, as compared to nurses, they have more of a range, their scope of practice is a lot broader when it comes to dealing with actual patient, and there is certain things like I understand that that there was like, like some some injections that we just cannot and then a nurse can.

Liz Norell - Yeah. Will you work in a hospital or a clinic or nursing facility? Or is it all of those?

Oscar - There is a wide range of areas that we can get into today actually, we had a representative CHF Memorial come in and speak to us about what they offer as medical assistance and that there is a high demand for that at this time so I am like, yeah, that is good, but personally, I want to get into hospital, but we can get into all those things and hospitals and clinics, small doctors office and practice there.

Liz Norell - So do patients interact with you when they first come in? Or are you there just kind of support the medical team?

Oscar - So, we can do both. If there is an administrative and a clinical aspect of the medical assistant and so the administrative I understand would also be doing that, for example, greeting the patient whenever they are inside the clinic or the hospital. So really, that is the first impression that we give them and so being professional and wanting to make them feel welcome and there is also the clinical aspect, it does not go into so much with the front end of what is going on in the office, but in the back and helping the patient hands on and doing like the vitals and assisting the doctor with whatever it is that brought them in that day.

Liz Norell - So have you gotten really good at taking blood pressure?

Oscar - We have not gotten into that.

Liz Norell - Not yet.

Oscar - Not yet. We have our stethoscope ready so.

Liz Norell - So good. Yeah, I am glad.

Oscar - But hopefully this next semester.

Liz Norell - So what made you, you talked a little bit about, you know, wanting to do personal training and then realizing like maybe that is not the right career path and you mentioned taking AMP over on the credit side. So what led you to TCAT now?

Oscar - So I have a friend, who previously went through the Medical Assisting program I want to say about three or four years ago and I have just been really good friends with her and I have seen where she is at now. The position that she is that is where she is more stable with her with her family, she is married, and with her husband, great friend of mine as well, and just seeing where her education brought her to and that made me want to take that, that step to we spoke about it too, before just a couple months ago and she knows that I always wanted to get into medical medical fields. So, she said this is not only a great stepping stone, but also if you want to pursue your education further down the line. This is a great way to begin it to launch that so speaking with her, and just realizing for myself that personal training is great, but personally, I want to do more with patients then with, with clients, who want to reach fitness goals.

Liz Norell - Are you here using Tennessee reconnect or any of that, are you?

Oscar - I am not.

Liz Norell - No.

Oscar - No, no, I have been here for about two and a half years at this point, and I was on the credit side for about a year and a half so.

Liz Norell - Can you talk a little bit about maybe there is a time during your ten year at Chatt State, either on the credit or the TCAT side, where you felt like you really belonged here?

Oscar - Definitely and, I will say there is been plenty of times, but I say the most recent one was just now with this medical assistant program and with it, we are here from you known, seven in the morning until 2.30 and so we are in this one class we are taking five classes, but it is in one classroom setting and so we have become really familiar with our classmates. Off course with our professors and so, definitely, by this point, we have had a, you know, just a couple of parties that we have had in class and just going through everything together all the tests, and we all feel, you know, anxious together, and we all feel relief together when we are done. So definitely, by this point, we felt more like family, whereas the beginning we are super, you know, like anxious and nervous. We do not know each other, but now we are more comfortable and we were comfortable asking ourselves those questions about, you know, how did you prepare? How do you know this? And how can you help me learn what I do not know?

Liz Norell - And beyond just this general sense of family inside the classroom, what other relationships have felt really meaningful to you at Chatt State?

Oscar - I will say, with our advisors to our professors and our advisors, Mr. Mercer he is wonderful. I mean, he is always really light hearted and I remember once one of our meetings, it was not a great day like for me just I just was in a slump and we had our meetings for skills and he just brought it up like he is always joking around like he is great and professional, but he can always boost the like the more round the room. So Mr. Mercer and Mrs. James as well they always help us out and I do not know if that day noticed it but he definitely has an influence on me and getting me in that mode and being ready with whatever it is that we are going to be talking about that day.

Liz Norell - Yeah. What do you feel like is the most important thing you have learned at Chatt State so far.

Oscar - That is a heavy question.

Liz Norell - It does not have to be. It cannot be.

Oscar - Definitely all of the material that we have gotten in class is super important, but with it going back to like the AMP that I learned is that you have to be really persistent and you have to dedicate and focus yourself on the study material. It is really easy for us to get home and so just you know, lay on the couch and turn on Netflix and just forget about it and not study like fine mostly great now, but definitely, it has taught me to learn to gauge my time and to really study to look at my material and if I do not understand it, try to view it from like a different way and if not ask for help, or that is from my classmates or from my professors, but making sure that I understand what I do not know and not being afraid to ask, you know, just going out and, you know, again.

Liz Norell - I think that is really a perceptive thing to say, because what you have said many times now is that knowing what you do not know, is almost more important what you do know because recognizing where those limits are, that can be really threatening to admit to yourself and to admit to someone else, but you know, you're in a field where if you do not know something, someone's life could be on the line.

Oscar - Exactly.

Liz Norell - And so you have to be really kind of honest with yourself and others about what you can and cannot do.

Oscar - Yeah.

Liz Norell - Have you always felt like that is something that you could do fairly easily or is that been part of the learning process for you as well?

Oscar - I will say that's been part of the learning process previously growing up, I did not have the best, I would say I was not so easily adaptable to I am getting feedback and taking it positively. I always thought, well, if you are telling me this is wrong, then I know that it is wrong and I know that I am in a spot where I should not be. So I took, always took it negatively, but definitely, you know, high school and now college, I learned that if someone tells me something's wrong, like it is a learning curve, and this is a point where I can turn that around, and you know, do a 180 and when 360 and just, you know, do better. So, yeah, it is, I have gotten better at it and I hope to by the time I am an actual medical assistant, you know, just feel so comfortable, about that.

Liz Norell - You have talked a lot about your family and wanting to provide for your family and the experience of going to the hospital and not having some forms in Spanish that you needed. If you are comfortable and you do not have to, but can you talk a bit about your family and what your relationship with them is like and how that influences your time at Chatt State?

Oscar - Sure. My family is really supportive of what I have done this past nearly two and a half years, I just worked and so I want to make sure that I have enough money to go to school, but even then, they told me before you do not need to work will be able to cover for you to go to school. So they have been very supportive and from a very young age, they have always told me that I needed to go to college to university, whatever it may be, but to pursue a higher education. My mother did, she got a level of, of university, but my father did not, just level of education. We are originally from Mexico and so the level of education, it varies. So especially my father, he is always pushed hard at it. So thankfully, with their support and their encouragement, you know, I am able to sit here today.

Liz Norell - That is awesome. What advice would you give to other people who are either here or thinking about coming here?

Oscar - I would say, my advice would be to not be scared of what is ahead. I think that I am 23 years old and there are plenty of people, who are older than me and younger than me that are going into college and did not think that they would be here, but I think that college is a time where we can experiment and we can learn where our boundaries are as a personal level, and where we can expand upon that and knowing where our faults are, and reaching out for that help. So I would say to just to not be scared, and to really go for it. I mean you are here and if you started on your first day, you know, just do not give up. I know that the syllabus can be a little bit overwhelming at times, but always remember the reason that brought you here in the beginning and that is what will get you through it.

Liz Norell - Yeah, I am recognizing that this is not something that you are doing just to have something to do, but there is a reason.

Oscar - Exactly.

Liz Norell - Yeah. I am going to ask you one more question. This is a question, but I have started asking this everyone at the end of our, of our Chatt, what really matters to you?

Oscar - What matters to me is what I have learned and what I will continue to learn in my program, what matters to me are the relationships that I have built with my classmates, with my professors, my advisors, and just being able to maintain also like a personal life outside of that, even though it can be very busy, but you know, sitting in touch with friends, and off course, family, but definitely everything that we are learning, just making sure that I understand it to the best of my ability, and being able to retain it because it is one thing for one day to have a test and then the next day, you know, take the test and forget about it, but now with finals, we are covering all that information again. So it is like, you know, you cannot just have that information and leave it and forget about it, but just to retain it as and like you have mentioned earlier, sometimes it is for a patient and that no mistake can be life or death and so it is super important to really know what you know.

Liz Norell - So that's beautiful. We have a professor here, David Wollert, who teaches Bio and he talks about how he had been teaching a Chatt state for a while and then his wife was going into labour with their kid and they went to the hospital, and the person who they saw was a former student of his.

Oscar - Wow.

Liz Norell - And that was the first time we are here. So I hope I taught them well, you know, like, this is not just for fun, or for a grade like this is real life and so, you know, when you are talking about doing this work and helping people, you know, kind of keeping that in mind, like your teachers are investing in you just as much as you are investing in your own education because they know that people's lives I mean, you are not going to operate on them or but you know, you are going do stuff that, that really matters.

Oscar - Exactly yeah, thank you.

Liz Norell - Well, thanks for being here. I appreciate it.

Oscar - Thank you very much.

Liz Norell - Yeah. Those of us, who have the honour and privilege to work on Chattanooga state's campuses, know that something really special happens here and it is 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 to 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 will be back soon with another instalment of Tiger Stories. Until then, make it a great one.

[Music]