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Featuring: Kasey Kerlick, CRM Coordinator at Stephen F. Austin State University

How did you first become involved with TACAC?

I first attended ACCI in 2017 just two weeks after I became an admissions counselor. Even though I have been very involved in my local organizations, It wasn't until 2022 that I joined in on the ACCI ops team and helped set up a conference. I honestly wish I had stepped up sooner, it was very rewarding to help people new to the career.

What inspired you to pursue a career in your field and what do you enjoy most about your career choice?

I think like 90% of us I fell into admissions by accident and have stuck around for almost 8 years because of all the people I have met along the way. I do love admissions, I love helping students find their university, I love the data behind everything but, what really makes this career so special is the community behind it. On the road you can run into people only once or twice a year but you feel like you really know them, you want to catch up, get lunch, sit at a coffee shop next to each other and get some work done. You get to watch and encourage your colleagues to work their way up within their university and then move somewhere else. I have never seen another community like ours.

How has being a TACAC member been beneficial to you and your career?

I have attended two TACAC conferences and after both I was able to go back to my campus with a million ideas of how we could improve/change/re-vamp things. But participating in the behind the scenes of things you really get to see all the moving pieces and how much work goes into making everything seem smooth.

What do you think are the most important qualities for success to you and your career?

I, like many people, struggle everyday with 'imposter syndrome' I have ended up on two conference committees because someone with more experience said 'Hey I think you would be great at this' and both times I was shocked they thought so. In admissions counseling, confidence is an important quality. We stand in front of hundreds of students at a time and tell them things they might not want to hear. I have confidence in my ability to command a classroom, a college fair, a counseling session, but even after 8 years I am not always confident that I am someone who can pass on advice to people coming into this career. I know a lot of people that have been here 3-10 years feel the same way, but we have learned a lot and we should step up and help spread confidence across others.

How do you think you impact and inspire students?

I hope I inspire students by keeping it real. I was not a top 25% kid in high school, I was a top 75% kid. I tell them my story, how I got denied by every university I applied for and had to go through a summer program to get in. How it was totally worth it and it built my confidence that university was something I was capable of doing. I graduated with a 3.0 GPA and my parents were so proud of me, because they genuinely didn't think I was going to do well. I tell them about the struggle of student loans but also the way my view of the world changed for the better. I hope I inspire them that if I can do it, anyone can do it.

How do you balance work life and personal life?

I am a HUGE advocate of work/life balance. My mother taught jr high for 30 years. I watched her stay up at schools till well past dark most nights and nobody ever noticed, she did it because she loved her students. She used to resent the new teachers coming in for leaving at the end of the work day because she knew they couldn't be getting all their work done in that time. Then her daughters grew up and went into the work force, they advocated for themselves and told their bosses they weren't given enough time for a project instead of working well into the night (and not getting paid) to get it done. She realized the system had taken advantage of her they tapped into that love and exploited her into working harder without additional compensation. I am never going to say 'stop working harder' but I will say 'take a break, it will be there in the morning, go home, spend your evenings the way you want to'. I

have yet to see more than a handful of projects hit my desk that couldn't wait till Monday to get finished. Unplug and turn off alerts for the office over the weekend, I promise its going to be fine.