

Episode 125: alan burns & the quest for a good mattress

- LOUGAN

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- JACKIE

I'm JACKIE Vetrano from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

- LOUGAN

And I'm Logan Bishop from Belmont University. You're listening to Higher Ed Social, part of the ConnectEDU Network.

- LOUGAN

Yeah it's been an interesting weekend for me anyway. I have gone mattress shopping like, that's been an interesting -

- JACKIE

I struggled so hard when I was mattress shopping.

- LOUGAN

What did you end up getting?

- JACKIE

I don't know. Some bed. Like they all blur together and then it's like, I just - I wish I could stay the night in the mattress store and then I would feel the feels the next morning because I'm not going to know if I'm to have lower back pain within 10 seconds of laying on a mattress. Like I need to know what a full night's sleep is like. Even if I napped on it for 20 minutes and then they woke me up and I feel it and it's like I don't really feel that refreshed, like it would be great.

- ALAN

Whenever I've done that before, you also feel really weird just laying on a mattress in a store.

- JACKIE

Very true

- LOUGAN

Yeah.

- ALAN

With other people walking around shopping and you're just laying in a bed. It's kind of odd.

- JACKIE

And I don't know if either of you actually sleep on your back, like I don't sleep on my back. I also feel weird being like I'm going to get comfy in this mattress store. Like that's weird.

- LOUGAN

I stopped caring after the the second mattress store.

Oh you went to more than one? Nope.

- LOUGAN

I went to - I went to five.

- JACKIE

What? That is too many.

- LOUGAN

I went to

- JACKIE

Aren't they all the same?

Mattress Firm, Mattress King, sleep outfitters, Rooms to Go. And there was one more that I can't remember but it was so i

- ALAN

That's a lot of mattress shopping

- LOUGAN

I did do a lot of mattress shopping. And what's here's what I found. Right. So every mattress store has the same brands but all the different mattress stores have different, like versions of that brand right? So take for instance

Mattress Firm has the Simmon's beauty rest black hybrid but Rooms to Go Has the...and it was the Claremont version of that. And the Rooms to Go has the Simmons beauty arrest black Natalia and they're different. They are different mattresses they are literally different mattresses.

- LOUGAN

Like one has smartphone features and the other one doesn't. And no I did not get the one with smartphone features

- JACKIE

Why not? It's so squishy.

- LOUGAN

I almost did like it like monitors your heart rate and your respiration and like feeds it into the app

So like literally smart phone. Not like smart foam when you push your hand in and that has your hand imprint.

- LOUGAN

No smart phone as an iPhone. It measures it. It uses Apple Health to measure your sleep quality which is actually kind of cool.

- JACKIE

I was going to say, knowing you as a person LOUGAN I'm shocked that you didn't buy that mattress.

- LOUGAN

Well I really thought about it hard. That was probably the best feeling mattress in the world that I have ever felt. It was amazing. And then I pulled out my smartphone and then I looked at reviews and see that's the thing, is that I went through - I actually had it narrowed down to like three or four different beds. And the question was which bed do I want and do I want an adjustable bed? Which you know I used to not think I used to think adjustable beds were the things you old people buy on TV. You know CraftMatic adjustable beds. But I got in one that was adjustable, and I was just like oh my gosh this is amazing. And well you know with the running and the long runs and all that kind of stuff. You know when I come home after that I I get like six pillows and I put my feet up. This is better. And it has like massage like it's awesome. So I ended up getting and IComfort Blue Max 1000 which uses this kind of foam that cools like it like because I like I like to not be hot when I'm sleeping. So it cools you by ventilating under you. And then I got an adjustable with with massage. So yeah it was an investment. But it's I like it. It's it was probably it was not the the most crazy comfortable but it's memory foam and it felt great. And you know it is just finding the right price and you know haggling with - going back and forth between three different stores saying well this store gave me this

- LOUGAN

And you know this store gave me no interest. And this stores offered me 10 percent off. What are you going to do for me. And I'm I am very positive that I got the best price that I was going to get. And yeah. And now it's all really good it comes on Thursday.

- JACKIE

Wow.

And Patrick Stewart's coming back to be Captain Picard. So it's been a great great weekend.

- JACKIE

Wow and that and I guess that's the end of the show. Thanks so much Allan for being here.

- ALAN

I feel like I learned a lot about mattresses.

- LOUGAN

Yeah.

- LOUGAN

But it you never I'll never believe that they don't haggle because they'll all haggle.

- JACKIE

Well and I won't make you tell us what bad you sleep on. But I think we should have you introduce yourself before we spend more time talking about mattresses.

- ALAN

All right. So my name's ALAN Burns. I am a research associate here at the Social Science Research Center at Mississippi State University. I handle pretty much all the communication efforts for the center as a whole. I say that because there are other little individual projects in labs here at the center that do have their communication efforts, whether it be social media websites or press releases and such they handled themselves. I handle center as a whole - we do collaborate on some, but I do like to make that distinction. People don't think I'm managing projects for managing projects for you know media, and communication for technical projects but yeah that's a brief rundown of me. I'm 28 I live here in Mississippi been in Mississippi my whole life. I actually grew up in the Mississippi Delta which is where a lot of people have heard of. It's is like when it you know it's one of the four regions in the nation and then after or after graduating high school I came over here to Mississippi State and I've been here for a decade now

- LOUGAN

Wow Where in the Mississippi Delta are you from?

- ALAN

Originally from Greenville Mississippi. It's right on the river.

- LOUGAN

That's awesome. I'm from a small town too. I don't know if Greenville is considered small. How many people are there in that area?

- ALAN

It's not considered small but it's only, I believe it's last count somewhere around 35 to 40000 I believe somewhere in that neighborhood. The area is not small but you know of course compared to everywhere else it's it's pretty small.

- LOUGAN

So, this is kind of a shock for me. I've always lived in towns of 3000 to 6000 people.

- ALAN

Oh wow

- LOUGAN

And that was the big town. That was Pulaski Tennessee and then you have Minor Hill and Prospect and Elkton which are even smaller than that that have you know less than that. And the entire county had like 30000 people in it. So when I went to MTSU and I stood in their brand new stadium that held 35000 people I was just like wow the whole county could be in this one stadium that is nuts. And of course that's a small stadium.

- ALAN

Yeah that is a very small stadium compared to know places like Alabama and probably like Ohio State probably has a big one.

- LOUGAN

I've lived in small towns my entire life. So it was maybe that's why I love living in cities so much now is that hey I don't have to drive 30 minutes to the grocery store. Well I do but because I like that grocery store better than two grocery stores because now I have an option there's not just one or two grocery stores I don't just have to go to Wal-Mart. You know I can go to Kroger or Murder Kroger or hipster Kroger or Publix

- ALAN

Yeah it's always good to have options. I mean so Starkville. It's a it is a college town and we do have a couple of different options but mainly we have a regular Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market Wal-Mart which are both on opposite ends of the town and then somewhat in between you have a Kroger and then you have a little local place called Bowles which used to be a Piggly Wiggly, if you know what those are.

- LOUGAN

I do. I do. Win a date with Tad Hamilton. Great movie. And I grew up with Piggly Wiggly down in South Georgia. But. Here's a random question and it has absolutely nothing to do with higher ed which I seem to not be in that mood today. But since we talked about mattresses and all but have you ever been in the Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market?

- LOUGAN

I have one near my house and I've just never gone in it and I'm just kind of wondering.

- ALAN

The one they put up here where we live we live right off of the college. And that's on one end of the town. And basically all of the big stores like Wal-Mart Kroger that are on the complete other side of town now. It's a 15, It's less 15 or less minute drive to get from one end of the town to the other. I think the whole city is like seven miles long. But the neighborhood Wal-Mart that they put in is literally two or three minutes from my house now so we've been going there a lot, it is pretty nice.

- LOUGAN

Yeah it's like a super Wal-Mart without the other stuff that Wal-Mart has.

- ALAN

This is a really good selection is really clean and you can kind of get in and out extremely fast without all the distractions of a normal Wal-Mart.

- LOUGAN

Nice. How many people around you call Kroger Kroger's

- ALAN

I would say a good number

- LOUGAN

Yeah that's a southern thing.

- ALAN

Yeah it is

- LOUGAN

Wal-Marts. Kroger's

- ALAN

I used to work at a Kroger when I was in high school so the amount of times I did here with the s on the end is pretty high.

- LOUGAN

I feel like Publix was originally like public and then everyone just caught it Publix because they like to add S.S to everything and they just changed it to an ex and they're like we're cool. They just rolled with the branding just rolled with it.

- LOUGAN

See JACKIE got to talk about Buffalo all last time

- JACKIE

No, I get to chime in. I have a I have a Kroger story. I was just waiting to jump in with my Kroger story.

- JACKIE

First of all I did not realize until this little moment that it's called Kroger and at Kroger's. My bad. But I I was out running some errands today and I don't normally shop at Kroger but I was...

- LOUGAN

You never looked at the logo and not seen an S there?

- JACKIE

No because I don't, I don't shop there and they don't have them in North and so I've only been here a couple of months and so I just didn't know. And all I've done is heard it and like you said everyone calls it Kroger's so I just thought that's what it was. So the plaza I was in had a Kroger and I was like I'll just run and I'll grab stuff real quick. I did not realize that all of the Kroger stores in my area are closing. And so I walked in and there was a big sign. It was like everything 75 percent off and I was like holy cow what is happening. But you walk in and it is empty. The groceries - not empty and a sense of like wow there was barely anything on the shelves. Like everything was shut down and condensed into only one small aisle. So you had like toilet paper next to. I don't know like Oreo cookies next to like I don't know NyQuil, cat food. You know like it was every single thing that was left in their stock condensed into one small aisle. But it was all 75 percent off.

- JACKIE

So I grabbed a couple of things clearly not as much as I needed or I planned to get because I needed some things that were refrigerated and they shut it all down. And when I cashed out the guy looked to me he goes did you find everything okay. I almost laughed in his face.

- JACKIE

There was nothing there. And then he joked and he said, Well would you like to open a Kroger card? I'm like I don't know. You're kidding or if you're serious.

- ALAN

I think that has a good sense of humor.

- JACKIE

I feel really bad that the store will be closing within the next like three days. And it's kind of like well what do you say to this dude who you know is losing his job, and then started rambling at me about how some of them are turning into gyms and others are turning into Harris Teeter and you know but Kroger is unionized and Harris Teeter is not. You're going to pay more money with Harris Teeter, like I did not cause this problem I didn't even know you existed. I'm so sorry

- LOUGAN

So opposite thing happened here. Like the Harris Teeter near Belmont turned into a Kroger. Random. And you know a really funny story I was in Oregon and they have Fred Meyer up there and you know I was checking out and they were like Do you have a Kroger plus card and I'm like yes.

- LOUGAN

Turns out Fred Meyer is owned by Kroger.

- JACKIE

Oh Fred Meyer is a name in the book store. Got it. That was the person I got very confused.

- ALAN

He was hanging at a friend's house

- JACKIE

Right. His personal pop up store.

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- JACKIE

So I want to ask a higher ed question because we do I think we're contractually obligated to talk about higher ed for at least 10 percent of the show.

- JACKIE

So with it being the summer everybody thinks, oh it's the summer we're chillin we're doing nothing, and I'm guessing that's not the case for you.

So what is like on your desk right now? Like what's on your to do list for this coming week?

- ALAN

Yeah I'm like my wife actually works in the public schools. So she's gotten two months off she just went back last Thursday so she actually got two months off for the summer which is really cool. She got to do what she wanted all day and I still had to work all summer. But right now so we are a research center. We do about 10 million dollars worth of research every year usually on different socio economic, political, human resource - those types of topics. So we have all kinds of projects going on basically year round, and normally this summer it's a little bit laid back because a lot of the researchers decide that they want to leave and go on vacation if they're not teaching or don't have anything big going on, but for some reason this summer was not like that. So we produce an annual report every year. And since I'm the sole communications person here I handle all of it and we released that in October. So we are we've just gotten into the planning phase of that. So right now I'm getting together with everyone who we're going to be writing feature stories on. We're going to have six full feature stories that will either be one to two spreads and then we'll have I think right now we're looking at five to six half page to single page stories as well. So we're geared up geared up for that. I am getting in touch with everybody setting up what we plan to do for the stories and we're going to have to do interviews, write the stories we'll end up doing photography for those. And then of

- ALAN

course with the whole report usually we give ourselves about two to three months to get it together. I collect all the information do all the design, do all the layout. And yeah just pull information together put all of that together. That's my big project for the next two three months.

- ALAN

As well as I just got handed down the need to help someone on a Web site that was going to go live this past week and they at the last minute someone didn't like some of the pieces on the website. So of course they asked if they could bring me on for 50 percent time for the next two weeks to hammer out an refix website launch as soon as possible that came out of nowhere.

- LOUGAN

It always does it always does. Yeah. I'm a web person too and I'm not at all like saying anything bad because stuff does come up like that and it's important. But it always happens at the last minute which is always interesting how that works. But most people don't notice it because you know everyone does stuff and then you notice the end of the year. I mean the beginning of the year is you know two weeks away and then.

- LOUGAN

Yeah what does school start for you.

- ALAN

I believe we I believe it starts back the 22nd. I know the students move going to the 12th and usually it's about a full week beforehand.

- ALAN

And I believe it starts the 22nd or somewhere around there

- LOUGAN

We start on the 22nd as well Moven is the 17th. So we're ramping up ramping up to the move in day. Watching my countdown.

- ALAN

We went down to the grocery store earlier this morning and there's already people that aren't on campus that are moving in, because it just you know just past August 1st. All the people who don't live on campus just sign their leases and moved into apartments and houses. Yeah it's it's not pleasant when on when everyone comes back and you go from a pleasant shopping experience to everyone running around trying to cram as much stuff in as they can and all the stuff that you wants off the shelves.

- LOUGAN

That is the thing with a college town.

Never go to Target on move in day.

- JACKIE

When I walked into a different grocery store today because clearly I did not get my groceries at Kroger and they had all the "Welcome UNC students" like ask about college discounts! Just like all those signs were all over the store today.

- ALAN

You know it's that time when you walk in a store in a college town and all of the aisles where they normally have are the middle sections of aisles.

- ALAN

They were normally you know they put something out on display. Now you walk in and it's all pillows and clothes hangers and wastebaskets.

- ALAN

And you know all the kind of things people need for dorm's

I should have gotten into that market; can make a fortune on dorm stuff.

- ALAN

Yeah especially with the designer dorms now you could you could make a killing.

- JACKIE

It's crazy. It is crazy absolutely crazy how much the people put into their dorms my mom was like mismatched and hand me downs and garage sales all kind of hobbled together to make a room for myself.

- LOUGAN

I actually think that interior designers for dorms that is the future and we talked about that on the show before how that should be like an internet series.

- JACKIE

That would be pretty funny.

- ALAN

There are some pretty some pretty elaborate ones if you go look it up like the I don't know if you've seen the trend, but there was a dorm for Mississippi State featured online in an article some point in the past year where they were doing designer dorms. Where these girls in their dorm they were going and finding like going to fabric stores and crafting all these cool things to put like folding curtains and bed skirts out of stuff. And they I mean they looked like you're staying at a hotel when these when these girls get done designing their dorms, and it's really interesting.

- JACKIE

I wonder...is there like a specific place we can find that? I want to see.

- ALAN

I'm not sure. I could look it up and try to send it to you later but yeah it was pretty pretty interesting.

- LOUGAN

It's a great thing for the show notes.

- ALAN

I know y'all have a link dump. It'll be pretty cool to throw in there.

- JACKIE

Yes. Hopefully we can find it for our listeners and listeners if you have any interesting highlights of your students dorm rooms. We would love to see them because that would be pretty cool because it's it's very different now. Back when I went to school...

- LOUGAN

Back in my day, we didn't have have high speed internet.

- JACKIE

There was no target back in my day.

- LOUGAN

We had a one T1 line coming into the whole university and we were bragging about it

- ALAN

And we don't even have a Target here by the way. I know you just mentioned that. We're one of those college towns that don't have a target.

- JACKIE

Oh my God why do you have students that go to your school.

- ALAN

Well the nearest one is an hour away. We'd have to drive to Tuscaloosa or university of Alabama is to get to a target

- JACKIE

Your students probably have so much more money than any other student because they don't walk in a Target and then instantly spend all of their savings.

- ALAN

Oh probably so. Unless they just take a weekend trip.

Oh my God. And what it's like? Is it like a stockpile situation? Like you bring giant vans that you can like stockpile up on Target stuff?

- ALAN

Oh yeah. You just find somebody you know with a truck or a bigger SUV and you just cram you know four or five people in and everybody loads up the vehicle and stuff.

- JACKIE

It's too funny. Meanwhile I'm walking to Target wanting one thing and coming out with a truckful.

- JACKIE

So, the website issue; I had a question about it. Is that kind of in your wheelhouse in your job responsibility or is this kind of an other duties as assigned situation or is that like all hands on deck for you guys?

- ALAN

No it is in my wheelhouse. I've got I've got a bunch of the websites related to the center as well as the actual one for the Social Science Research Center. I manage that on a daily basis. I mean it's not like it's super from the you know from the ground up. We do a CMS or content management systems, primarily WordPress. I do customized themes and do a lot of CSS coding on the back with that. But yeah I've had to do a couple for the for the center. That's actually how I came onto the center to begin with as a full time person. If you wanted to hear that story.

- JACKIE

Absolutely

- ALAN

So in 2012 during my senior year of undergrad. I got a internship here in what was known as the media collaboration laboratory. It was a lab where one of the instructors in the communication department she started the joint lab here where she would bring on undergraduate students as interns, and what she would do is they would bring on any type of media project that researchers around the center needed. They would contract with that lab like it was an actual design firm or a public relations firm. And the students there would do primarily all the work. She would serve as the mentor and she would bring the students on, hand down projects, like OK you know Allan we just got this new project. I know you don't have anything going on right now. So what got handed down to me is one of my big projects towards the end was we had something

called the Public Safety Data laboratory house here and what they did was they dealt with traffic data specifically with the Highway Patrol in Mississippi. Taking that data and putting it out forward to the public can have access to it. It was you know important data about like citations, seatbelts, fatalities on the roads, those kind of thing where researchers might need the data. They had a pretty outdated website. So I had a little bit of skill working with websites and having having took a class and played around with them for fun on my own. So I got brought in I said sure you know I'll take this project on you know that sounds that sounds like it'll be fine. They also had a really bad logo at the time. It was basically just some circles with the letters in there and I was like, You know I think I could craft a better logo. So while designing the website I ended up designing a logo for them on the side during my free time and presenting that to them, and they liked it and took it on as the new logo. Well basically I graduated and I didn't have a job lined up as you know it happens a lot of undergraduates.

- JACKIE

No you were only one.

- ALAN

But so the person over at the time, Tanya Neaves, she said, Well how about I bring you on as my graduate assistant and you keep handling PR for the lab, you handle our Web site, you design all of our fact sheets, you run our social media accounts, and such and I was like you know like I like what you do with the website I think

- ALAN

you'd be great managing it from here on out doing all the updates as they needed it because they used it for Grant cycles. So it was pretty important to have the data dating website maintained. And I was like well you know I don't have a job lined up but the problem is I'm not in graduate school and have any plans to go to graduate school because I just didn't know what I wanted to do. That wasn't the thing that I planned on doing at the time. So she said yeah OK well you have a month to figure out a graduate program to get into apply to it and get in that program. And I can start you here as a graduate assistant. And since I didn't have a job lined up that's basically the route I took to get on at the center as a graduate assistant I did end up getting into a program. And going through all of that I graduated in 2013 for the program. They brought me on full time here afterwards and then through some different means, Dr. Walton who was over the lab at the time, she decided that she wanted to actually leave the university. She was going to go travel and do mission work. And so they needed somebody to run the lab because it was a very short notice thing. And I was at the time the only person that was still here that had had any experience with the lab because I used to be a student in there. And so they said Hey Allen this is kind of short notice but we need to pull you over and have you be the coordinator of this lab

- ALAN

You know how to run it you know how to do PR communication efforts. So I ended up moving over there doing that. And then after that lab went away. I became the sole communication person so then it became my responsibility to handle all the Web sites. But basically building one Web site got me the job that I have today. I've been here six years now.

- JACKIE

Everyone has such a different path. But I think I've heard I don't say exactly your story but similar stories in higher ed, where you start to build connections very early and like your undergraduate experience that helps you kind of move through ladders and get into the right space.

- ALAN

Yeah yeah. I mean it was it was I don't want to say luck because you know I did put a lot of work into it and I did try very hard to get you know make those things look good in get a good product out. But making the right connections and just being in the right place at the right time I think it helped.

- LOUGAN

Hey I started in admissions and I redid the admissions website and ten years later I now run the whole Belmont website.

- ALAN

So it's a similar or similar.

- LOUGAN

Very

- ALAN

And this what you what you were talking about, like in the right place right time, I try to I do interact with the communication students now from time to time. I'm going to be speaking with some of the some of the students in the Public Relations Student Society of America. Yeah, PRSSA. Our chapter here I do actually speak to them from time to time during the semesters, and I try to talk to them about this kind of thing. I tell them how I got in my position and that they need to be making the connections going out making an effort you know doing their best work and being proud of it putting it forward. And it's pretty cool when,, I think I mean it was a weird situation and I just kind of rolled with it and did my best. But I try to explain that to them that it's you know you can use that situation and actually follow that to a career path especially if you don't know what you want to do.

- LOUGAN

That's just a great story. So what's it like to run the lab.

- ALAN

So the lab is actually not around anymore. It closed down in 2016 but from 2014 to 2016 I was the coordinator. And so basically what happened was what we did I would come in, I was the coordinator and I had an office in there and then I would hire students every semester so we floated generally anywhere from four to six students every semester and then we would usually have maybe one to two in the summer. Some students would get to hold over and go multiple semesters. It's kind of like a merit based thing.

- ALAN

I would put out calls for people to apply and I'd bring them in and interview these undergrads and then I would you know go through a formal interview process I think. I think that was very important and it helped me understand a lot about myself when I applied to the lab. And Dr. Walton went through a full interview experience as an undergrad, I realized I was very overwhelmed whenever I did that I didn't realize how tough it would be. I mean I was a senior at the time so that was very shocking to me so I thought whenever I took it over I would keep going with that same experience because I think it I think it definitely helps weed out the students that actually care and want to try. So we would bring the students in. They would have their own computer it is basically big open air offices. We wanted it to be where people could talk bounce ideas back and forth and that was an important component for the students. You know they had to be able to work with others in an environment and especially because this is working with researchers here. You have to be able to learn how to develop a relationship with a researcher just as you would a client if you at a real firm you know or any design firm or PR. They've got to do that. People would come to me they would say hey you know we just got this new project at the

center. And we say we're going to be teaching kids about healthy eating. What we need is we need some programs designed we need some fliers designed. We need

a new Web site. We need some PSAs put together. And so what I would do is we'd sit down and talk to the students I figure out you know who didn't have a project at the time or you know who had the expertise to get this done. And then we kind of planned out the projects and had the students go from there. I was not supposed to do any of the work. I would help them out from time to time. But for the most part I was just supposed to be the facilitator and the manager. I was supposed to oversee their work, help them if they needed it or give them any tips. But mainly bring in the work and give it to me. And I've liked running a pretty self-reliant shop. The students had free schedules. Basically they would they would schedule their own hours and they would let me know when they were going to be in the office. They had keys get in the office they could come in and work you know whenever they wanted. It wasn't just during business hours, if they wanted to come in at night they could come you know work at night. We had a 15 hour a week limit so they could get paid to work 15 hours. Basically they would just schedule their own time to come in and work. And I wanted it to be where they were pretty independent and they could work around their schedules because students are pretty busy especially if some of them had other jobs on the side. And this allowed me to have to

- ALAN

find some pretty strong students and actually some of those have gone on to do pretty good things. But you really got to see in that kind of environment who is good at managing their time and actually showing up doing the work when they weren't on the set schedule if they weren't there at 8 o'clock in the morning. I wasn't going to call them and say you're not here you know are you late. More like OK well they didn't show up at 8:00 today. Their schedule says they will be here at 8:00 but you know maybe something's going on because there's a lot going on and student's lives and you know I think it was important to allow them to kind of manage their own time.

- JACKIE

It's so hard and I'm sure Logan can speak to this too. I'm just working with some students like finding the bALANce of accountability with students when they when they're student workers because you want them to have their own accountability because when you grow up and become an adult you're responsible for your time. But also they've never been in a working environment before and might have to kind of like, say like well no you know you can't just roll in and that you know 9:00 o'clock everyday when you're supposed be here at 8:00. You know it's it's very...I found that to be very challenging when I work with students because I wanted to trust that they could just get everything done, and sometimes they didn't follow through and it's like OK well how do I kind of show them that they're responsible for this while they're also bALANcing a million and a half other things.

- ALAN

It is and I try to be really understanding about that whenever we whenever we were running lab to and like I said I would very quickly find the students that knew how to manage time and took it seriously versus the ones who maybe gave a good interview. And so I'd bring them in and then you know because they knew they had free time

and they weren't required to be there at a specific time. You know they would kind of slack off and not show up. It was kind of hard because...So I got that position at 24 years old managing students who are anywhere from 18 to 21. So I was the manager and the peer but I was usually only a couple of years older than these students and it was a really odd situation for me because I did it. You wouldn't you know you assume with the manager or administrator or anything like that that there's a there's going to be some like age difference specially with a peer, and you know they're going to have all this extra knowledge that you don't have. And I think a lot of them realize you know hey when they met me I'm almost there same age and it was kind of odd. But I think you think the dynamic worked.

- JACKIE

Yeah. Are you still working with students now.

- ALAN

I was up until this past spring. So basically what a lot of the projects ended up ending a lot we had a bunch of long term projects they were you know anywhere from two to five years in those put in a lot of funding for the lab. But over time some of those projects ended, some of those researchers left to go do other things and then some of the projects that the big ones that we have going on now didn't necessarily need our services besides odd jobs here and there. So it wasn't enough to sustain the lab. Right. So what we were doing is we were using certain projects to fund having a student every summer and every fall. Up until this past fall were one of the projects that we did that with ended. So right now I'm currently not working with any students but it's it's different because I've been working with students for so long. But it's, It's hard to hard to explain not having not having a student worker when I've always had one you know to be kind of like a mentor to.

- JACKIE

And truthfully I mean a lot of times it's like it was nice having those students that liked to do the the work that I could technically do myself. But it was really nice when someone else was helping me do it.

- LOUGAN

It was and I'm sure it allows you to be more productive and it gives them experience.

- ALAN

It did. So I can I can do 10 things you know but do I necessarily want to divide my my efforts up into 10 different objects or I don't want to pull out you know any of the efforts or the good and the good work that I might put into a project because I'm working on so many small things on the side. The good thing about having someone to work with is that we get I can give them a couple of tasks that I know they could handle. And I was fairly confident they would put out a good result. And then I could focus on some of the bigger stuff as well. Now I'm focusing I don't have to do the annual report and I have to do this new Web site and there's crunch time on those but they're still so I have to manage social media accounts daily for the center. I still have to make updates to the Web site. I'm putting together a newsletter every three weeks. It's all these little things that you know I have to do that are that take away a little bit of time from the big projects.

- JACKIE

My gosh. Well I think, speaking of being busy. I think that's all the time that we have speaking just like you go, and you can get started on those projects.

- ALAN

Well I appreciate you guys having me on.

- ALAN

It's been fun. It's been great. Thank you so much.

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