

## **“WORK: Redeeming Our Labor” - Blog #3**

*Dan, Assistant Director for Student Success (UNCC)*



*This blog series is a part of our sermon series “WORK: Redeeming Our Labor”. We hope this set of interview style blogs is encouraging to our church family as we strive to be faithful in our labors and put our vocation into the story of God, for His glory, our good, and the benefit of the world around us.*

*\*Answers have been lightly edited for grammar and spelling.*

### **1. Tell us what you do and how long you've been doing it.**

I work in higher education, supporting college students in different facets over the years. In my current role, I supervise 3 graduate students and 20-30 undergraduate students, and our goal is to support students on academic probation by meeting with them regularly and giving them assistance with skills and resources to help them get back into good academic standing with the university. I just started this new role a month ago but have been in similar work for over 3 years.

### **2. What are some of the highlights or things you enjoy about your job?**

There is a lot of opportunity to give students hope and show them that I care about them and see something in them that they might not see themselves. I have helped many students become leaders, pursue careers they enjoy, find meaning and joy in college, and help them attain the very challenging goal of obtaining a degree. I also love the space I have to plan and create resources that students use to improve their academic skills and mindset on growth and failure.

### **3. What are some of the more frustrating parts of your job?**

My job can be frustrating when policies made by the university, state, or federal government do not provide pathways or forgiveness in a way that feels like it ought to be extended to individual students. The system is large and complex, and policies do have to exist to give leadership and direction for a huge institution to

make sense of how to support students, but it hurts to see when certain requirements or stipulations negatively impact good and hard-working students.

#### **4. How do you see your work as "joining God in cultivating the world?"**

There are a lot of challenges in the college student life cycle. Everything from a first-generation college student fighting their hardest to make enough money and succeed in their classes to be the first in their family to graduate, to students struggling with depression, negative self-worth, pressure from their parents, etc. I find it very fulfilling to be a beacon of care, hope, and grace to students when I can be. For my co-workers and supervisors, I see this when I feel the need to step up and serve or even to be the person who says "thank you" or "I trust you" when they need it most.

#### **5. How does the gospel of Jesus impact your work?**

The gospel reminds me that I am not perfect, I will not always get things right, and that it is okay to forgive myself for not doing everything right the first time. This gives me the freedom and patience I need with myself that allows me to focus more on steady growth rather than expected perfection. I can extend this posture of patience and forgiveness to others by helping them see their own self worth and ability to separate their past performance with who they are right now and who they can be in the future.

#### **6. What are some current prayer requests you have with your job?**

My current prayer request is for our students. COVID and remote courses hit students hard and unexpected transitions are very stressful at their age, let alone the academic pressure they are already facing. Ask God to intercede for these students who have to fight out of a lower GPA because they had trouble focusing and retaining information when it shifted to an online environment. Pray for a smooth transition back and an atmosphere of welcome, care, and support from faculty and staff as we shift back to in-person courses.