Alumni panel offers insight to students

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

When Mariam Noorzad, a recent graduate from the School of Business at the university, was promoted to senior assurance accountant at Ernst & Young, she said that she credited her internship as being key in jump-starting her career.

"The internships that I had before I started my full-time role definitely played a part in it, and I can see that now being on the other side," Noorzad said. "They couldn't expect me to have a lot of experience, but they wanted to see that I'm trying."

Alumni similar to Noorzad returned to campus on Thursday, Nov. 14 to share their own stories at the Emerging Leader Alumni Panel.

In the Claire C. Bennitt Watershed Community Room in the School of Business, students were able to see a reflection of who they could become once they cross the stage.

Panelists included Omer Abdulrazak, FSO assurance associate at EY, Matthew Reed, finance business partner apprentice for Liberty Bank, Kwadir Delgado-McIntyre, procurement associate at the university, Bayleigh Takacs, global sales and relationship management at Fiserv and Derek Viets, manager for Enterprise.

Over food and refreshments, speakers offered students valuabe insight into how to successfully transition from college to the workforce.



PHOTO | WADE BARILLARO

Alumni panelists prepare to answer questions from the audience on Thursday, Nov. 14.



Students listen to panelists as they enjoy refreshments in the the Claire C. Bennitt Watershed Community Room in the School of Business.

Each panelist placed high emphasis on taking advantage of opportunities while in school.

Abdulrazak, who had his first internship during his master's program, said he wishes he did not start out so late in the game.

"I was scared of finding opportunities or being rejected," Abdulrazak said, "but once you finally look for these opportunities and apply to them, you build your confidence in it. And once you build your confidence in it, it will work out for you."

Speaking from her own experience, Noorzad said that she would discourage herself so much due to having her daughter while in school. After graduating, Noorzad said she began to see the unique story that she brings to the table.

"I would say that you have to have confidence. How can you expect others to believe in you if you don't believe in yourself?" Noorzad said.

Panelists also encouraged students to utilize the resources they have at the university.

Delgado-McIntyre said that having mentors helped his professional journey.

The alumni, whose mentors came from playing sports at the university, said that he recommends that students find mentors that have already achieved what they want to do.

"It's just someone who you look at and you have respect for. I feel like they have a lot to offer," Delgado-McIntyre said.

Whether it is a team of mentors or peers that students can rely on, it is important to make connections.

"You seek out all of the opportunities here within the school, and you network with those individuals that you work with on a daily basis to be able to have these lined up for yourself before you even graduate," Noorzad said.

An attendee at the event, tourism, hospitality and event management major Ta'Mia Mackins, a freshman, said that she thought the event was very insightful and was a good opportunity to network.

"I left here with more information than when I walked in," Mackins said. "I learned that I need to update my resume and make a LinkedIn profile."

There are ample opportunities and resoruces on and off campus for students to get involved in and begin their professional career.

Takacs said her final advice to students to take with them is that "experience is priceless."

University's Instagram account reaches new heights

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

On a typical afternoon, students at the university scroll through Instagram. They watch a new sighting of Otus the Owl or a recap of a football game, all posted from the university's social media accounts.

For many at the university, these accounts not only offer a way to stay informed — they are how they feel connected to their campus community.

"They do a good job engaging everyone," English major Grace Ryan, a sophomore, said. "It shows a lot of information about the school."

The university dominates the Rival IQ's Higher Education Social Media Engagement Report for this reason.

According to the 2024 report, the Owls soared to No. 3 among the Division II schools in this year's social media rankings.

This was a leap from their previous spot at No. 10 last year.

The official university accounts are present among various platforms, including Instragam, TikTok, X and Facebook.

Jason Edwards, the social media coordinator, said that he credits himself and his teams of student workers for reaching this achievement.

"We have student workers who come and go with us, and we like to give opportunities that way, so it's very much a team effort," Edwards said. "I definitely see improvements day to day."

These accounts' dependability and connectedness allow them to interact with everyone in the community, from students to alumni.

Edwards said they put emphasis on video-based content that captures student life.

"Hearing from student perspectives is great and ensuring that our students see themselves," Edwards said. "We're a very diverse campus, and we show that through our art, photos and our content."

Through various Instagram takeovers from students, alumni spotlights, meme-based content and impactful photos, the university's diverse audience can resonate with each post.

"We make an emphasis to really extend content and make it accessible in that way, so it catches both your eye and your ear. So, that's something that I always look out for," Edwards said.

Due to their appealing elements and highlighting of popular trends, many students remain in tune with the social media account.

"They do a lot of what's trending, and it makes it engaging for everyone," Ryan said.

Sociology major Rosiely Mendoza, a sophomore, said that she is a fan of the university's official Instagram account, @southernscsu.

"I like that they are always trying to fit in by posting popular content," Mendoza said. "My favorite is when they post videos and photos that relate to trending memes."

Examples include poking fun at professors for assigning exams from Quizlet or highlighting students' favorite study spots.

For many students, scrolling through these posts is a part of their daily routine.

"I always stay connected online since I check my social media daily," nursing major Madeline Elmo, a sophomore, said.

With the click of a button, students are able to stay in touch with campus life. Ryan said that she is proud of the university's engaging social media presence.

"They reflect the Southern campus well," Ryan said. "It can help students know more information about the campus and bring other students who are looking into college decide where they want to go."

Edwards said that his goal is to showcase how unique students at the university are.

"Our students, they work, they go to class, repeat. It's very hands-on at the university, and it's even more admirable when they take on extracurricular roles," Edwards said "We try to emphasize the student experience is really a working person's experience."

Edwards said that he is always available to connect with students and share more relatable content.

Edwards said, "I'm always open ears for opportunities to share what students are doing and any good news."



PHOTO | INSTAGRAM

The university's Instagram account.



PHOTO | BRIANNA WALLEN

Jason Edwards on the second floor of the Adanti Student Center on Nov. 5.