Johnathan Reaves

Instructor of Creative Media Production

Johnathan Reaves was nominated by Taylor Shannon for P.R.O.P.S. Recognition. Shannon said, “I am enthusiastically nominating Johnathan Reaves for recognition. In his role as academic advisor, he consistently demonstrates a remarkable commitment to our students and our university. His contributions go far beyond the expectations of his position, and his dedication to fostering a supportive and engaging educational atmosphere makes him invaluable. Known for his lighthearted sense of humor and fun-loving personality, he makes students feel comfortable and valued.”

P.R.O.P.S. subcommittee members Catherine Beaver, Kelsey DeFord, and Madeline Ragland spoke with Johnathan to learn more about him and his experience at A-State. Reaves talks about his previous years as an academic advisor. He is currently transitioning to be a full-time instructor of Creative Media Production within the A-State’s Department of Media & Journalism.



Johnathan Reaves

What do you like most about A-State?

I love the community that we have here at Arkansas State. It is a very tight-knit community. It's a community that looks out for one another. I really like the Red Wolves mascot because there is that pack part of that. And when we had Dr. Damphousse, I really still believe in that Every Red Wolf Counts. Whether you are a student or a faculty or a staff member, we lookout for one another.

We love each other, so that's what I really appreciate about the community. I'm a two-time alum of Arkansas State, working on a third degree right now. I couldn't think of a better place I'd want to be than be here at Arkansas State. It's just it's home. It is. It's home.

What do you wish everyone knew about your job on campus?

So the academic advising role, I would say that academic advising is crucial to the success of students, and that students should take advantage of the opportunity to get to know their academic advisor. There are studies that have shown that students are more likely to stay in school and go to graduation if they have that positive relationship with an academic advisor. One of the things that really broke my heart is when I would hear students come into my office and they said that previously they felt like they had to do everything themselves. They didn't know how to navigate through things. They had specific challenges that they didn't know that how to be able to go around and work through. And that's what academic advisors do.

Ideally, it should be much more than just creating course schedules and those things. It should really be a relationship between advisors and students to be able to ensure that students know that they have a place they can go to. Ideally, that academic advisor is going to be the one main constant person that is it that that student will deal with from the university. So get to know your academic advisors. They're good people. They want to help. And that's what I would say to every student. Get to know your academic advisors because they work hard to ensure that students are set up for success. So that's what I would say about academic advising. It is extremely important.

I will say this, I’ve seen many people in Catherine Beaver or Taylor Shannon’s offices, right? And I mean, when they sit down, it’s a safe space. That’s what it’s designed to be where you can come in, even if you’re having a bad day. Tell me what you’re experiencing. What challenges are you facing? That’s a real benefit for the student to know they have an advocate in their corner.

If you could travel anywhere, where would it be?

Oh, that's a great question. I will tell you that on my bucket list is taking my wife Jennifer and going to Hawaii. When I get out of this doctoral program, one of the things I would love to do is to take her to Hawaii.

As a celebration, but I would also like to renew my wedding vows with her, and also take (daughter) Emily too. We'd love to be able to do that and just make it a full family thing.

I've never been to New York City. And I would love to be able to see New York City.

If you could describe yourself in one sentence...

I guess if I could describe myself, I would like to think of myself as being caring, outgoing. I just genuinely love people, and love the students that we have here at Arkansas State.

What is your most recent binge show?

So I will tell you that I'm a little odd, in that I have 30 years of broadcast, radio and that. So I'm more of an audio person than a video person. I would rather listen to audio podcasts than I would watch TV. That's just me personally, but one that I was listening to because we have Jaws with the 50th anniversary. There's a great audio podcast called Blockbuster, and it's not a new one. It's kind of an older one, but it tells the story in one season about how George Lucas and Steven Spielberg were kind of working on Jaws and Star Wars around that time. And really told the story about some of the challenges that they were having. George Lucas had all sorts of problems with Star Wars. Nothing was going right.

And he knew that he needed to have some sort of music, and he was thinking about having maybe an orchestra, but he wasn't really sure. And it was actually Steven Spielberg who recommended John Williams because he wrote the music for Jaws.

And it was in the music for Star Wars was the only thing that exceeded his expectations originally. George Lucas's. Of course, if you could imagine Star Wars without the music, I mean, it really helped set the tone. Another [podcast] I love is called 20,000 Hertz. It talks about how sounds are created and how sounds are made.

There is another podcast. Now the language is very salty on this. I'm just going to say it's extremely salty. But there is a true story podcast called American Hostage, and it's a really good story. And it tells about going back to old time radio journalism in the 1970s, and tells a true story about how a news director committed a cardinal sin of journalism. You never make yourself part of the story. And through series of episodes, he did, and it was really interesting to listen to. It has John Hamm from Top Gun in there. And so those are kind of the three that I have been recently binging.

Before retiring, what would you like to do?

So I am currently working on my doctorate in higher education. It's an education leadership through A-State Online. I'm now a full-time instructor in the School of Media and Journalism and Delta Digital News faculty advisor.

I'd like to continue teaching like on a professor level. Also, I would love to be able to maybe run an advising center at one point, kind of oversee an advising center, or maybe one day work up to be a department chair or maybe an associate Dean or something like that.

So I would love to be able to work in in that area. It would make me very sad if I was not able to continue having some sort of interaction with students. Because the students really are the heart of the university.

I think as long as I could have some sort of continuing interaction to be able to help them. That would be that would make me very happy.

What music is playing in your car?

Once again, I'll go back and say I'm more of a podcast and audio book kind of thing. But if I'm listening to music, I have to say I love the 80s and early 90s. I am an 80s and early 90s kind of person.

I have to admit, there are some times when I want to start imitating Casey Kasem and the American Top 40, right? That's what I would like to do. I love the 80s and early 90s. I think that those a lot of those songs have stood the test of time and that's just my jam.

When I think of like ‘87-’89. I graduated from high school in 92, right? So that was kind of the music of my childhood. As I was going through junior high and high school. So that's what I'm listening to for sure.

In school, what were you most known for?

I was not like this when I was in school. When I was in high school, I was more shy. I was not as outgoing. I got into radio like right after high school.

And so that kind of brought all of this out. The one thing that I think what I was known for was I have bad knees that my dad gave me and I really wanted to play football, but I couldn't because of my knees.

So I was actually the equipment manager for high school. And I really enjoyed it because you learn the ethic of being a team. You learn that part of it, and you learn the work ethic and you learn all of that and you still have those team parts of that. So I wasn't on a “most likely to” list. A lot of what you see of me now came after school.

But I think that what high school years taught me was: I didn't have very many friends in high school, but the ones I did, we were loyal to one another in that. And so you learned about loyalty and being part of a team. You learned about not quitting. Once you make a commitment, you stick with it no matter what happens. And some of the things that I learned, my wife and I were able to teach Emily when she was on the soccer team or dance team. You may want to quit, but you have to stick it out through the end of the season.

And I have to remind myself as I'm going through this doctorate program, because it is exhausting. And sometimes you lose your motivation and it's like, OK, you've got to keep thinking about you're in this to win it, right? And so, how do you pick yourself back up when you want to just lay down and say I can’t keep doing this.

And I hope that those lessons are things that we can also teach our students.

Now going back to school, I can kind of understand. I have a better understanding of when students come to me and say, “I just don't have the motivation. I just feel like I can't push through.”

I can honestly tell them, “look, I'm right there with you.” But we can do this together, you know? So those are some things I learned in high school, being on a team and all that.

Hopefully we can use to be able to help motivate our students to keep going. We've tried to teach our daughter to do that.

What is the best advice you ever received?

The best piece of advice I ever got was from a former faculty member and it's on my signature line. “Pay it forward.” Because when I was working on my master's degree, she had helped me when I went through undergraduate school. She helped me through all that.

I said, “I cannot tell you how much you mean to me, so how can I ever pay you back for this?” And she said, without missing a beat, “Pay it forward to your students every single time. And as long as you do that, you're paying me back because you're paying it forward to someone else.”

So that's what I live by as much as I can. We're paying it forward to be able to help somebody else. And as long as we can do that, we're making the world and A-State a better place.

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