Natalie Eskew

Executive Director of University Housing

Natalie Eskew was nominated by a student for P.R.O.P.S. Recognition. “Natalie has helped many people, including me. Even with the food pantry, her and Dr. Martha Spack brought me a box of food literally to my dorm. They have many housing issues to assist with; it’s the least I can do to nominate Natalie.”

P.R.O.P.S. subcommittee members Kasidy Newbern, Cathy Naylor, and Madeline Ragland spoke with Natalie to learn more about her and her experience at A-State.



Natalie Eskew

What do you like most about A-State?

That's hard to pick just one. But I think all encompassing would be just the people, both the students and faculty and staff. It really feels like home. I think it's just an atmosphere that if you're willing to take time to get to know the people on campus and just even start with simple, “Hey! Hi! How are you? Where do you work?” You never know how many small connections that can make 1.) make someone feel welcome, but then, 2.) that they can teach you things that you don't know or didn't know, that can make your job easier. But then, also our students, a lot of them starve for connection, even though they seek that a lot of times through social media platforms. They really do need that in a face-to-face interaction or a connection via email. And so, it just always feels like home.

What is one thing you wish you could teach everyone about your role on campus?

It's never dull! For me, I've learned things. I've worked with students for years, and I have that passion and love it; but in this role, I've had to work with trades in facilities that frankly, I never thought that I would even have to think about, such as what an air handler unit does, or why this construction was built this way, or why it wasn't. I try to be positive, it's not dull, and a lot of people think of roommate conflicts, but I try to think of the positive things--we really get to make this a home for students and staff/faculty, too, that live here on campus, even though we have fewer of those--and they want to make this their home a lot of times, but there are parts of it that I never thought I would have to consider.

If you could travel anywhere, it would be…

I think right now there's a lot of places, but Africa would be one. It's always been on my bucket list of places to travel! And not just for the safari aspect of it, but we do have students that are from Africa. I work with several South African students, and then I've had students from Zimbabwe and all other places. And so, even though we have lots of international students, Africa is just one that I wanted to do. And it's not just for the safari, but also the culture differences! And, you know, maybe who knows? Maybe I'll go back again after I've been once. But that would be one place.

What is your favorite hobby?

My favorite hobby is kind of two-fold, depending on the time of year. I love to read, it just gets work off my mind--frankly at night--which sounds really silly, now that I think about it. But I love to read! I have always been a big reader. I go through spurts, though, which ties into my second one. I do read a lot throughout the year, but I love to be outside, and so when it starts warming up some, I just either love to sit down on the porch, or by the pool, or wherever…it doesn't have to be Summer and warm, but just to be outside in the fresh air, and reading is kind of a two-for-one, but then also just being outdoors to go for walks or hikes, is a big stress relief for me, too.

Before retiring, what would you like to do?

I still go back and forth with toying about getting my Doctorate’s. I miss school, but also, I know it's about having the grit to do it. But I think about that probably more now than I have in a while, because I would be the 1st in my family to do that as well. And so that's something that I think about. That and seeing where my career path will take me.

The best advice you ever received was…

The best advice I've ever received is one that I still am learning but that it's okay to take time away. I was always taught to be a really hard worker, and to follow the example my parents set. They were at work a lot, and that wasn’t a bad thing, but they just didn't take a lot of time away.

And so that, coupled with when you're away, it's okay to disconnect as much as possible.

Who is your role model?

I have a couple of different role models. Of course, one would be our Vice Chancellor, Dr. Spack. We talk about her often with her and separately from her in our division. It's not uncommon for several of us to talk about not just how much she bounces, but Dr. Spack always just knows the right way to say things, and how to say it depending on who she's talking to. My other role model, aside from Dr. Spack, was Dr. Cooksey, and when I think about both of them, it's two different generation times, since Dr. Cooksey's not here. But they were strong women that sat on the table of predominantly male leadership. And Dr. Cooksey, I tell her every time I get to see her, “You know, you were really strong to do that, and to hold your own.” I'm sure that there were times that maybe she questioned--and Dr. Spack too--if they were supposed to have the seat at the table, and they absolutely are, and I think that they both set very good examples.

Describe your biggest obstacle and how you mastered it.

Well, there was a time early on in my career, and then, as I started being a director that I sat at the table, and I was either the youngest one, or the only female, or I did not know the lingo that was being talked about, and I wasn't always confident in speaking up or asking questions. And so that was an obstacle for me at times, because I was also trying to instill in the newer employees, that they also had the importance of feeling like they belong. And how do you overcome that, and with our students, too? So, I just had to really work on being more confident and knowing that my voice mattered, or that if I had to ask a question, it’s okay. It's sometimes something that I still have to remind myself, so I don't let it become an obstacle, because I think we're all in different positions sometimes where it's like, “Oh, this isn't my strength, and I don't want to do that.”

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