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Haley Johnson Interview

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Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 0:04

I'm here today on November 20th, with Haley Johnson. Okay, so my first question is, can you tell me about your family background and how it's affected your education?

Haley Johnson 0:20

Yeah so, my parents were both the oldest of their families, my mom's oldest of two my father's the oldest of eight. And they were the first to go to college, in their families. And they both went to Brockport. My aunt also ended up going to Brockport from my mom's side. And so I guess that affected my education in that growing up I always heard about Brockport but I didn't really understand like what it was until I was a junior or senior in high school. And also like growing up with my grandparents on my mom's side, I grew up with not a lot of money, especially My grandfather, so he would always push like, college and education like me going to college was always something that was going to happen. It was just more a matter of like how and were. But my grandfather always talks about how like education is the one thing people can't take away from you. So that was always pushed on me and instilled within me at a pretty young age.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 1:19

Okay, um, did your parents attending Brockport influence your application for Brockport?

Haley Johnson 1:25

Yes, in that I did not want to come here at all. Because I'm the older I was the oldest. And so I just didn't want to come here because there's so much pressure from everybody for me to go here. So at first I was like, very apprehensive. But then, Brockport was the only place that had Arts For Children program. So that was ultimately why I chose Brockport.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 1:49

Do you have any siblings?

Haley Johnson 1:50

Yes, I have one sister. A stepbrother and three stepsisters.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 1:56

Did any of them attend Brockport?

Haley Johnson 1:57

No.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 1:59

Okay. Can you tell me more about your inspiration to attend Brockport?

Haley Johnson 2:06

See, I pretty much just didn't want to come at all. I wanted to be a teacher at the time, but I didn't want to pick a subject. Because I am not good at math. I like science. But I like some sciences more than others, but I'd have to take all of them. If I was gonna do science, English, I really enjoy writing, but I hate reading and history. I liked the most probably out of all of them. And that'd be like the one I'd be most interested in taking. But it's still like wasn't really what I wanted. I wanted to be an art teacher. And so I thought about going to Fredonia for a while. And Damen, had a good education program. But then I found the arts for children program, where it's like art integration within the classroom. So that was like the closest thing to being an art teacher but also like not having to pick a subject and I remember like reading the description, and I remember I read it to my mom. I was like, I'm going to Brockport like that's where I'm going to be.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 2:59

can you tell me more About your attitude towards college before coming?

Haley Johnson 3:04

It was really something like I didn't fully understand it was also the type of thing like, I felt like I had to do it if I was going to be successful, which I think that has changed. Even now that I work in higher ed, I feel like that opinion has changed. like I said, it's just something like I knew I was going to do it, it was just a matter of like how

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 3:27

did you find resources on how to do that?

Haley Johnson 3:33

yeah, like for me, it was mostly like financial, like strain I was raised by single mother. So we didn't have really any money growing up. And I ended up applying to Brockport because that was the only place I applied to because the people I babysat for are the ones that paid for my application fee. And I didn't have the money to pay for another application fee. So once I decided on Brockport, this was the only place that I applied and I was lucky enough to get in.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 4:03

Did you regret only applying to one school?

Haley Johnson 4:07

Not really, because like I really didn't have any other options. And also once I found arts for children, there's no there is no other school that has a program like that. So it was so unique and it was exactly what I wanted that I felt very comfortable only applying to Brockport.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 4:21

Right. who do you consider a mentor in your decisions? During college and how did they help you?

Haley Johnson 4:28

I would say Kevin Warner he was the chair of the arts for children program at the time. And Chris O'Connor. He was my advisor, my art advisor, because I was visual art specialty and a studio art minor. So I had him a lot. And then also like, people like Sara Kelly and like Kim Haines were big mentors to me as well just in like more student leader way. But Kevin Warner sat me down like my fall semester freshman year and we wrote out my four year plan, like on a piece of paper that I don't think he even intended for me to keep for four years, I probably have it in a folder somewhere still, but that was like my roadmap to how I'm going to succeed within arts for children and the education program what I need to take when I need to take it, and he just laid everything out for me. And that was like, critical, because I didn't realize like other students just didn't get that. And so like, I never struggled with like, what I was going to register for what I was taking or like, Oh, crap, I didn't take this thing that I need to graduate like that was never me because I had that support from Kevin, and Chris, which was huge.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 5:37

What year did you graduate? And what was your major?

Haley Johnson 5:40

I graduated in 2016 with my bachelor's in interdisciplinary arts for children and a studio art minor

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 5:48

okay, um, what made you decide that major?

Haley Johnson 5:53

just the uniqueness of it and I felt like I could have my cake and eat it too.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 5:59

What do you plan to do with your degree?

Haley Johnson 6:03

Well, I had a quarter-life crisis the January, January 2016. Right before I supposed to graduate, I realized I didn't want to be a teacher, and it made me like really unhappy. So I I don't really utilize my degree like how I thought I would. Sometimes I fantasize about being a charter school teacher. But I don't really think I would ever do that. Honestly, My degree makes me like a really great aunt I teach the boys about all sorts of stuff without them realizing that they're learning since pretty much what my degree was in. But also I have really great creative problem solving skills, which is definitely like a strength and I can see those skills like compared to my colleagues, like I excel in that area, where like, I'll be given a problem and I'm really good about finding a solution that people just don't think about. But that's because with arts for children, that's all it was. It was you're gonna teach a math lesson or history lesson or English or science, but you're doing it with dance through music through visual art, like make it happen. And so like four years of learning how to think like that, it really shaped me to become like a really creative problem solver with everything, which I'm grateful for.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 7:20

What made you stay at Brockport after graduating,

Haley Johnson 7:24

I was engaged at the time to somebody who was in undergrad at Brockport, so that was a big reason why I needed to stay. Also, the stars kind of aligned for me within higher ed, I had a graduate assistantship lined up. I was accepted into a master's program with like open arms because my GPA was so high, and everything was just kind of lining up for me to continue and to stay.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 7:50

Do you regret staying at Brockport?

Haley Johnson 7:51

Sometimes I do because I want like I kind of wanted like that big grad school experience of like going to like Syracuse or like Michigan State or like something like that, but then also like, I look at my student debt and I'm like, okay, like I did, I did, okay. Compared to like some of my peers who have like \$200,000 of debt, like, that's not me. So I am happy with that. Like we work at the same place or whatever. And then like, I think I felt more self conscious about it until I interviewed nationwide and then I had offers from places all around the country and then it was like, okay, like, I'm valid. Like, it's okay that I stayed. So, I think I'm okay with it overall.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 8:32

How did you how did becoming an RA while in college shape your experience?

Haley Johnson 8:37

It like shaped my entire experience. Um, I don't know where I would be right now. If I wasn't an RA, probably be a teacher and probably be miserable somewhere in a classroom or something. Because being an RA It was like everything to me. And I was able to actually help people and see the change that I was like, instilling in my community and With my residents like I would get thank you cards, they'd get me flowers, like, I like knew I was impacting them. And then one day when I had my crisis Kim Haines, the Director of Student Union was like, have you thought about higher ed? Like, you'd be great in higher ed, you've been a tour guide, you've been an NDA, like you're an RA, a union manager, like all you are, is higher ed, like you need to get into higher ed. And I was like I don't even know what that is like, because we didn't talk about it. At that point. nobody talked about how being an RA is a great way to get into the field of higher education. Because I was so hellbent on being a teacher. But then Kim said that and I was just like, yeah, like, I should go into higher ed like, I could do that. That feeling I get from being an RA I could have that forever. And so I was like, okay, but like if I wasn't an RA, I don't know.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 9:51

Right. Do you feel like financially it helped you?

Haley Johnson 9:55

It did help me financially, for sure. Yeah, I mean, I didn't have to pay for housing for two years I lived on campus for three years. And I didn't have to pay for housing for two of those years, which is pretty sweet.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 10:07

How do you feel Brockport has changed over time?

Haley Johnson 10:10

Brockport has changed a lot. Honestly, even just in the years that I've been here, I showed up in 2012. We're heading into 2020 now. It's so different. I mean, like, the beautification projects, for one are very different, which is nice to see like them putting money into the institution. It's like a place that like I'm proud to work at. But also just like culturally, like our culture is changing, which is really cool. Like over the time that I've been here when I was a student here, we used to have our students of color protest up and down campus like regularly because of how they were treated. And like now we have students of color, who created like the men of color group like that was created when I was a student here and so like to see them Like, come together. And to see that change from like, we literally used to have, like active protests of like over 50 students up and down the campus, protesting for like their voice, and then to see them, like, create a group where like they can advocate for themselves and build those relationships. It's so cool to see that progress in just like seven years, seven or eight years time. Like that's pretty neat, right? And I feel like our students demand so much more now than what we used to of, like, with accessibility issues. Like that's something that we have made tons of progress in and we still need to make progress and our campus was not accessible at all. Seven years ago, it was really bad. Like the fact that we have a couple of blind students is huge. We could never have had blind students seven years ago. There's just no way. And so like the fact that our students are aware of that now it's just really cool to see the change that our students have demanded. And then, for me being somebody who's been here for like seven years, students don't always get to see their change, because then they leave. But like, I've been able to see change that students have created, and that's been really cool.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 12:11

So do you feel like without like, students advocating for themselves that it wouldn't be the way it is?

Haley Johnson 12:16

I don't think so. No.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 12:18

How has the education program changed over time?

Haley Johnson 12:25

Man I don't know. I feel a type of way about the education program. Um, from what I hear, it's pretty much the same. But you know, it is what it is. But the education program and I weren't a good fit, so.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 12:43

Okay, Why did you come become an RD after graduating?

Haley Johnson 12:48

I never thought I'd come back to ResLife. I had a pretty rocky couple of years when I was an RA in Mortimer, my RD at the time was very checked out and just did nothing like ever for us it was it was honestly like pretty rough experience. It was my residents that I loved, but like I hated ResLife like I was very like mad at them. But they didn't know what was going on, which now I can understand that. But at the time, it felt like everybody had to have known and like nobody knew. And so I was a grad in Student Union for my first year in grad school, but I wanted a different experience my second year because I told myself, I'm going to stay at Brockport, I need to differentiate my experiences, I can't just stay in ResLife or stay at Student Union, I need to like mix it up. So when I got the same grad assistantship my second year, I was like, I gotta, I gotta look for something else. And the RD of Mortimer at the time had left, Emily, and Monique called me and said, do you want to be an RD? And I was like, Yeah, okay. And I was surprised that she called because like I didn't have that good of an experience here when I was an RA but she did. And so I became an RD of Bramley 2017. And then I became the RD of Thompson 2018 RD of Mortimer, January 2019.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 14:21

Do you feel like that was a hard transition?

Haley Johnson 14:24

Yeah, because I lived off campus at the time and with my husband at the time and a two bed two bath apartment and it was like beautiful. And I had to move back on in Bramley and like at the time we were excited because we met as RA's, so it was like, oh, like, we're back on campus like this kind of like our thing. But then it was like, I've moved every six months for the last two and a half years. So that has been a lot. And that's that is a lot like for me as a human. Like, as soon as I get settled, I have to uproot my home. And that if I make it to May in Mortimer It'll be the longest place I've lived in like three years. So it's pretty crazy as like an adult. Yeah, Of me to do that.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 15:11

Wow. Um, how's your college experience affected by financial decisions you had to make.

Haley Johnson 15:20

It was affected a lot. It was a big reason why I became an RA. And also worked along as an NDA, a tour guide, like whatever little on campus jobs I could get I pretty much had, and I would work my butt off. I was very busy. But it was because I didn't have the money. And like, in the summer, I'd work my butt off, so that I could use that money to pay my bill. And that was a lot like I remember paying my bill. It was like, I'd be like, 1300 dollars once and just one big chunk of money in like that. That was my money. I worked for the summer and like it was gone. It was just like, wow, it's very like humbling experience and then realizing that like, not everybody's in that boat that was very hard for me. And like typically, when I think about like my own biases, like it's normally more rooted in like financial status, like that's where my biases lie. And so that was something I had to like really work through my first couple of years in school.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 16:24

Do you feel like if you did not have this experience, it would change who you are?

Haley Johnson 16:28

Yeah, for sure. I came to Brockport my entire life changed. like that.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 16:33

Can you elaborate on that?

Haley Johnson 16:35

Well, I was here for only a month, and then Alex was killed across the hall from me. So that changed my entire life. I was on dateline I was I had to testify in her trial, and that is what pushed me originally to become an RA. And then it's all the experiences I had as an RA like we are forced to look at ourselves critically and grow and I was a very different person when I first showed up, I think I've always like been in there, but like nobody ever pushed me to get that out till I became an RA. And like really dig deep and figure out like, what I bring to the table when I don't bring to the table. So, yeah, I mean, and just everything that I've done at Brockport . I mean, I literally worked from like the bottom up from an NDA to being an RD of Mortimer. Like my life would be completely different.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 17:34

Where do you see yourself five years from today?

Haley Johnson 17:38

I'll be pushing 30 pushing 31 so I'll be good. I can't wait to be 30 I've wanted to be 30 like my whole life. So I think I'll be good. I hope that's very what I want. And hope. Maybe I'll be in my second marriage by then.. Maybe I don't know if I'll ever get married again. Hopefully I'm in like my my long-term relationship. By that point, I want to be a mom to some extent. So that means fostering, I would like to foster kids or adopt or something like that. So I hope I have that. Personally, I hope maybe I have a house Hope I'm off campus by 30. I better be off campus, by30. Professionally, I see myself either doing event management or academic advisement. So maybe I'm an assistant director, somewhere at that point in my life. I don't see myself staying in ResLife. But who knows? So.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 18:44

do you see yourself coming back to Brockport in the near future?

Haley Johnson 18:57

I'm not sure, it kinda depends. This is my last year as an RD. I know I'm like actively applying and looking to get out a large part of me wants to go somewhere else. I think that that experience

is valuable, especially being somebody who has been here for so long. I think it's really important for me to go out and learn about other places, and maybe come back, but I'm not sure. I don't know if I would do that within five years. I would maybe come back to Brockport later in my career, but I don't know if I would come back within five years.

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 19:28

Is there anything you would tell your younger self

Haley Johnson 19:35

that you're doing great. I always thought I never thought I was doing as well as I actually was. I think it's part of the reason I worked so hard. Like you got it, and like Be kind to yourself and also like self care. I wish I figured that out a bit earlier. I feel like I've just gotten out and even then I'm still working on it. So

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 19:59

yeah, well Last question, is there anything you want to ask me?

Haley Johnson 20:07

Where do you see yourself in five years?

Vazquez, Nicole A (nvazq1) 20:11

Five years from now, I would hope that I have my Masters I hope to start teaching. And in five years I'll be 25? So, I always wanted to start a family at like 26. So hopefully have a house and soon a long term relationship and settle down like I don't I don't see myself I've never been a party person. Ever been like a party person though. Just like, likes to waste time I'm more of a like, time is money type of person. So it's just like I have my whole life figured out already at the age of 19. Like could things can change But like, that's my goal

Haley Johnson 21:03

Well good for you, cool.

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