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Living a Life of Significance

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Living a Life of Significance Essay Two

When I first met Kim Sowers, it was in a less professional setting. Being the mom of my girlfriend I introduced myself with the intention to bond with the family and be accepted. I had many friendly conversations with her and after some careful thought decided she was the perfect candidate to answer my question. How do others define a life of significance? Mrs. Sowers is the current manager for the web team at the federal reserve. She has worked there for four years managing both the information technology and the communications departments in a team of seventeen people. From there I asked how she entered down her career path to which she responded “That was never even my intended career path. I actually went to school to study architecture.” She said she changed career paths due to the low return on investment in architecture to public administration. Mrs. Sowers eventually graduated with a double major in public administration and liberal arts and triple minored in economics, political science, and philosophy.

With so many accolades I followed up with a question about balance. How did she keep up with her mental and emotional health alongside her educational activities? She gives all the credit to her immense amount of planning. She found a supportive community of people involved in similar activities that she could connect with. She claims that she never truly balanced anything, but rather all aspects of her life meshed together. She believes that this makes it easier to have a blended palette and causes less stress than trying to micromanage different aspects of your life.

Throughout her life she has had two influential mentors; one in college and another in her first job. The first was a professor who taught public administration and helped her challenge herself and test her limits. Mrs. Sowers was always a straight A student with little reason to challenge herself, often living by the words “stick to what you’re good at.” This professor questioned her way of living and recommended she extend herself to more challenging tasks whether than be school, extracurriculars, or volunteer work. She says this new way of thinking helped her grow and she now uses it to inspire others to do the same. The other mentor was a former marine who helped Mrs. Sowers not take life too seriously. Being that straight A student put a lot of pressure on her to get things right the first time, so when she wasn’t able to achieve perfection immediately she’d often panic. The marine responded “How many dead, how many wounded.” She looked back at him confused and said no one is dead nor wounded. The marine went on to say “Perfect, the rest we can take care of.” She said that way of thinking, coming from a former marine, really helped her keep perspective. The dichotomy of the two mentors kept her grounded during all aspects of her life.

Mrs. Sowers had always been a big advocate of the school system but not necessarily for the reasons people think. She exclaimed “The biggesting thing about school is it teaches you how to learn.” She argues that even going through college and memorizing everything will be useless in the long term because new information is always coming out and it will be impossible to remember it all. College has taught her how to learn quickly and effectively as well as retain the ability to learn.

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” Those are words to live by in a college setting. Mrs. Sowers said she never truly experienced failure until her senior year of highschool. The type of failure she faced wasn’t academic but rather failure to challenge herself and often letting the fear of failure bring her down. She said that later in college after getting a bad grade she would look over and correct her errors in order to not make the same mistake twice. Mrs. Sowers now encourages failure because it allows people to grow, going as far as saying “failure is necessary in order to achieve success.”

After talking about failure I then asked what recommendations she would give her younger self knowing what she knows now. Her response was to never back down from any experience and if you have the opportunity to try something new to take it because those are less likely to come in the future. She also said to not wait for a specific moment in order to do something because the future is not guaranteed. She regrets not taking time off in order to indulge in certain experiences and wishes that she spent more time focusing on other aspects of her life such as vacations or quality time with her daughter.

I ended the interview asking what her definition of a life of significance was. Her response was simple; “Do the most good.” She said to leverage the time you have and enjoy the people you surround yourself with while maintaining an understanding of your objectives at hand. The ability to be self-aware, have humility, and continue learning are all notable traits she said make a life of significance.

Before this interview I had never realized that the ability to learn is different from learning and that you needed both in order to live a life of significance. I now know that it's not entirely what you do but how you do it that's important. There are many ways to achieve the same goal and many roads to the same destination but that path is what makes you unique and your journey special. “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

Frost, Robert. “The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost.” *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44272/the-road-not-taken.

“Failure Quotes (2994 Quotes).” *Goodreads*, Goodreads, https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/failure.

Sowers, Kimberly “Life of Significance Interview.” 2022