

Advisors develop relationships, provide guidance

By Taylor Rodriguez
Staff reporter

An entrepreneur joined the Student Success staff in August to provide guidance to freshman students for the 2019-2020 school year. Two-time alum and business owner, Alleigh Allen, first year advisor, is excited to continue as a staff member with Southwestern.

Allen graduated from Southwestern in 1999 with her bachelor's degree in psychology and later returned to receive her MBA. Later in her career, Allen had the opportunity to purchase the modeling company she previously worked for, Models and Images. Allen recently sold off the domestic portion of the company, but she still owns the national and international parts.

Allen has been able to use her skills from her modeling agency to guide freshman students.

Allen said, "Even as a business owner, my number one best moments were when I was mentoring the modeling and developing. Developing was my favorite part. Working with them and seeing them grow in their career is really similar to working with freshmen, since I get to watch them develop and go through their college careers."

For Allen, her position at the college is all about developing new relationships with students. She finds this to be the most important and the most enjoyable part of being in Student Success.

"The students are the best part," said Allen. "Just getting to know them. When the class first comes in, they're just a sea of people and it's really easy to just lump everyone together and say, 'Okay, here is the freshman class.' But, as they calm down, I get to meet them and really get to know them. Everyone is so different and has totally different stories and everyone is dealing with different things."

Allen said, "I get to learn more from them more than they get to learn from me."

Alissa Sheppard, student success advisor, also believes that getting to know the students is

the most important part of the job. Sheppard said the positions she and Allen have in Student Success revolve around building relationships with students and helping them adjust to college life.

Sheppard said she and Allen have the opportunity to watch students grow.

Sheppard said, "I have seen quite a bit of growth in them. They have matured a lot and they now understand a lot of what it's like to be a college student. Life just makes more sense now. First we had to baby them, and now it's like 'Yeah, we survived. What's next?'"

Allen and Sheppard pride themselves on ensuring students know they can come to them for anything that they are having issues with. They want to keep an open-door policy for any students who need someone to talk to.

The two provide academic advice for students, resources to get in contact with a certified counselor, guidance for graduation plans and advice for anything with which students may be struggling.

Michelle Hawkins, health science junior, frequents Student Success and can testify to the helpfulness of the advisors.

Hawkins said, "They're always open and you can come talk to them. Also, when it comes to testing or any accommodations, they are open."

The Student Success Center is a safe space where students can come to study, relax or get advice from alumni who understand the struggles of being a student.

Allen said, "This is a place with an open door. We're not a coach, we're not a teacher. We are not someone with control over the students' grades or playtime. When the students need something, they shouldn't have to feel like they just have to do it on their own or just leave. They have someone who they know that they can just come down and talk to. The door is always open."

Taylor Rodriguez is a junior majoring in computer science and digital arts. You may email him at taylor.rodriguez@sckans.edu.

"I have seen quite a bit of growth in them. They have matured a lot and they now understand a lot of what it's like to be a college student. Life just makes more sense now."

- Alissa Sheppard
Student Success Advisor



Student Success & Retention:

Location: Basement of Christy Administration Building

- Academic advising for undeclared students
- Academic mentoring & tutoring
- Disability services
- Quiet study center
- Emotional support & encouragement

Hours: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Monday-Friday



"When the students need something, they shouldn't have to feel like they just have to do it on their own or just leave. They have someone who they know that they can just come down and talk to. The door is always open."

- Alleigh Allen
First Year Advisor