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[NCHO Podcast Ep1.mp4](#)

Transcript

Savannah Matherly

Hi, NCHO! My name is Savannah and I'm the NCHO Professional Development Chair. As part of my role, I wanted to provide accessible and intentional opportunities for folks in our state to engage with professional development. The Chair-Select, Abby, and I are happy to start an NCHO podcast for our state that can provide folks with networking, discussion, and ideation. For this first episode, we'll be asking our NCHO President and SEAHO President questions that have been submitted by folks throughout our state. I'm happy to introduce CJ Jackson, our NCHO President, and Dr. Stephanie Carter, our SEAHO President, to the podcast today. I'll go ahead and let CJ and Dr. Carter both introduce themselves before we jump into any questions.

CJ Jackson

Hello, my name is CJ. I'm an Assistant Director at NC State University. I currently serve in the role of NCHO President. I've been affiliated with the NCHO Executive Council for the last two years and super excited to have this role because it gives me an opportunity to ensure that I'm continuing to advocate on behalf of higher education professionals working in the state of North Carolina to ensure that they can support the students in the way that they need to support the students. Super excited to have this opportunity to talk about some of the questions that Savannah has prepared for us and look forward to an engaging conversation.

Dr. Stephanie Carter

Hey, y'all. I'm Stephanie Carter, Director of Residence Life at Wake Forest University, and I'm your current SEAHO President. I still have not gotten used to saying that I think at this point. I'm excited to be here too. I appreciate that NCHO kind of brought this idea to myself and CJ to be able to do this podcast and be able to kind of give outreach to more folks obviously in the state to have a chance to come to the conference and just be engaged in a different way. So I'm excited to be a part of it. Obviously have been involved with SEAHO for several years at this point and being on the Executive Board for the last few years in different capacities of the Governing Council. SEAHO is home. North Carolina is home. All the great things and being involved on the state-level and being involved on the regional-level and with ACUHO-I. All of the great things that come. So excited to be on this podcast.

Savannah Matherly

Awesome. Thank you both. So I'll go ahead and ask our first question. How do you both stay motivated when your department makes a series of decisions that you don't morally and ethically agree with?

Dr. Stephanie Carter

You know, when I saw that question I was like “Oh, this is a- it's a good one, right?” I mean, I think when I when I first thought about it, I was thinking, “Man, is this a one-off thing?” Right? You know, because sometimes absolutely decisions are made that we don't all agree with and we're trying to figure out what that looks like. To me, I think there might be a difference between what is a one-off thing and what is a pattern that I think you have to ask yourself if you're kind of- if this is a continual thing that goes against you and continues to push against perhaps some of the your personal values or boundaries that you have. I think, you know, at some point you might have to reevaluate if this is the place for you. And I'm never quick to tell anybody to leave because, you know, our jobs are tied to our livelihood, right? You may have kids. You may have other people who are kind of tied to your financial responsibilities, so leaving a position is just not an easy thing to do. But I also realize that you know what you don't want to be frustrated at work every day, right? At the end of the day, your mental health and everything else that comes along with it. I'm just not sure if it's worth it to just to be mad all the time at decisions that are going to be made, especially if it's a consistent thing. And to be honest, right, it is still kind of a job seekers market out here right now. There are positions open that might be better in alignment and I think you have to be able to have that conversation with yourself. And ask if it is now time to do so. Like don't be quick to do it. You know, like I said, if this is the first decision, “okay, I get it” right? It might depend on the season, too, but I think you have to figure out what that looks like and if it truly is kind of pushing against values that you truly hold on to. And if things continue to happen, you can ask yourself this question if this truly is the place for me. And if it's not? It's okay if it's not.

CJ Jackson

Yeah, I mean, I couldn't agree more. I think when I thought about this question, one of the things that that came to mind is, I mean, we're here to provide a service and keeping the students at the forefront of everything that we do. So I think when I'm in situations where I don't agree with the decision and there may be some more ethical issues that's really impacting it. I think making sure that I'm taking the time, first off, to reflect, right? Like helping myself to understand why am I feeling this way and really, truly being honest with myself in that reflection process. And then once I've done that right, having the opportunity to sit down with the people that can help me provide clarity in terms of helping me to sort of work through some of the issues that I've come up with during that reflection process is important, right? And then hopefully by the end of that, that meeting and that time there, there is some clarity that has been created to help me either feel better about the situation or, if I'm still feeling bad about the situation, I think it's very much one of those situations where I have to really do some deep soul searching and really kind of think about like if this is going to be the pattern, like Dr. Carter mentioned that this is going to be the pattern, that this department is going to continue to go in, do I want to be a part of that pattern? Right? And this, it's hard to. To be in situations where you have to walk away from a job, but at the end of the day, like one of the things as somebody who values integrity, one of the things that that I have to be able to do is I can't go home, I can't go lay my head down and go to sleep doing work that I know is impacting people in a negative way, right? Even if I'm getting a lot of money from it, like the guilt of not serving people in the way that I feel like they should be served would really impact me as a person and ultimately at some point impact my mental health. And so that's kind of the process that I go through. But I think that that reflection process is important, especially in helping to understand because there are multiple viewpoints and at times there are decisions made in which we don't understand the full context, or picture of the issue and so it's important in my opinion to kind of

do that reflection process and really understand why am I still feeling the way I'm feeling and constructively work through the things to help get the answers that I need to get answered.

Dr. Stephanie Carter

And hopefully you'd be able to have those conversations too with your supervisor. I mean, that may not be the director, but maybe your supervisor can ask these questions about like, "this is kind of weird to me..." or whatever the decision entails. Like, "I just want to know little bit more about it," right? Or can I? Can I hear the "why" behind it? Or maybe there's just something else is going on. I think you know, like you said, today it also helps you get to the root of the issue. And like I said, if this is- if whatever the decisions are being guided by some practice that just doesn't seem like it's going to change or the university or the department is going in a direction that you just don't agree with, I think that's a part of that reflection that you were saying then long term just may not work out or it's not with my soul. It's all these things just aren't working. Then you got to figure out what that looks like, but I think being able to understand some of the "why" behind it or just being able to ask a few questions, especially if it's just not sitting right. Hopefully that is OK in the department in which you work. If it is not, I think that is also a telltale sign that maybe this ain't the place.

CJ Jackson

Yeah, yeah, I think one of the things that came to mind as Dr. Carter was talking was that it's important to have your people too, right? Like people at the institution, people away from the institution, right? That when you are going through these type of things that they can vet these things with you. I have a bunch of people that like when I'm going through things or I need some additional contacts or I need people to help me to understand a different perspective, they are people that I go to kind of talk through these things. So understanding who your community is, I think community is probably a thing that you'll hear me talk about a lot because I really believe in that understanding who your community is and who you can go to to kind of help you process these situations. Again, to help you to understand the multiple perspectives is very critical.

Savannah Matherly

Awesome. Thanks. So our next question is what do you both see as housing's role in the ongoing attacks against QT communities and the DEI initiatives across our state and country right now?

Dr. Stephanie Carter

Man, like, don't even, get me started on what's going on in Florida, right? Ohh like you know and this is such a like- in my mind, such a BIG thing, right? Because I'm putting together a presentation for NHTI about current issues and guess what? All these things are current issues, you know? They've been going on, but they are very much prevalent right now with some of the legislation that's coming out. So I think it's kind of twofold, right, because I think it's obviously it's a lot bigger than the work that we are also doing on our campuses, or the control that we have. But just staying abreast of things that are happening. Because these decisions might not- not that this whole thing is about people finding new jobs or whatever, but if you decide to go work in a state that has legislation or stuff that's going on, that it's against things that you believe in as a human being, like you need to know that before you go get a job at XY and Z state or whatever that's going on. So I think people need to be very much be on top of the things that are happening. And understanding that legislation and what it looks like. And how it's

going to affect us, you know, at our universities, everything else that's going on. I think when you look at this on kind of a smaller level, too, in the residence halls or in the work that we do, I think it's about being able to create spaces for all of our students, right? To feel as though this, whether you have strong affiliations with the word "home" or that's a "safe space," or what it looks like, that our students do feel like they can be in an environment that is safe for them, right? So looking at the policies and procedures that we create that allow students who might be trans or, you know, in other communities that they can go safely to a bathroom. That it is not just one that's like, "oh, we just got one," right? "We have one bathroom you can go to in the basement" that basically makes you kind of out yourself as a student who is kind of transitioning. Anything else that's going on. But how can we look at our processes for how students pick roommates and how our actual rooms are configured that are supportive to students who are in community or in all of our communities, right? Whatever that looks like. I think we have to pay attention to the things that we truly can control, like our locus of control right now. But we have to understand the broader picture of what is that could come to our state or any other state, right in kind of a larger form as it is now, depending on who is in office or who we elect, right? So to me, I think that we play a role in the communities that we serve and the students that we serve and making sure that they can find the space that they feel valued on our campus and that they feel they can show us their full selves and what that looks like. And if we have things that are going against that, or perhaps we have an institution that doesn't seem like they fully support it, to be able to ask those questions about why we can't or what this looks like and start those conversations. But also, as I said, kind of being aware of the larger body that is shaping legislation, that is shaping the policies that come to us, whether you're a private institution or a public institution, obviously more so because the government control and the things that are there are huge.

CJ Jackson

Definitely piggyback off of that, I think that we have to be conscious of the things that we have control of versus the things that we don't right and at some particular, especially at this particular point in time, there are deep things that we definitely have control of and there are things that we don't know if we have control of or not, right? And my thing, my advice or my thoughts are, is that we need to own the things that we do have control of. Right? So we do have control of like how we build community, how we make people feel valued, and what that looks like in our community, and how we work with our staff to establish that sense of community on our campuses, right? And so for me, that's one of the things that I know we have control of, right? So addressing inappropriate, you know, conversations or comments or anything of that nature we have control of, right? And so really owning the aspects of building community and making people feel welcome that we do have control of, right? This is also an interesting comment, too, because I recently joined an ACUHO-I committee that's looking at building a model around building inclusive communities in housing. And so we're creating a model that essentially like helps people understand like when you think about community building, that starts at your values and then you build outward, right? And so I think that that work is going to be extremely critical to continuing to answer that question, not only in regard to QT communities, but other communities as well. As folks examine the importance of diversity in higher education, I think it's going to be important. But I can't emphasize enough that the importance of us as housing professionals really taking ownership of building that community and making sure that all voices are heard and us being cognizant of the voices that are not in the room to ensure that those voices and that the values of folks that's a part of

the community that's not in the room bring to the table are heard and are part of our communities as well.

Dr. Stephanie Carter

And I think like you said, some of that just starts with- I mean some of our offices just aren't even having the conversation. So how can you at least even start the conversation to kind of say like "this stuff is going on," right? Like what if it were to come to our campus? Or what could we be doing differently for our students? Or let's talk about the great things we have done and how can we do more? But I think sometimes it is just about starting the conversation that some people just haven't even been able to. And as you said, like making sure the voices around the table are representative, and if not, then how can we be? You know, how we bring our students in the conversation, how we bring in other campus offices into the conversation about this. And I mean at the end of the day, we want our students to have a great experience. All of our students, right? Not just some of them. I mean, as much as we can control the experience they have with us when they live on campus, how can we make it one that people feel welcome?

Savannah Matherly

Great. Thank you. So our next question. Post-pandemic, it seems like a lot more of our housing grads are engaging in fields of study outside of Higher Ed, such as possibly social work or psychology. Is this a trend you've seen at your institution, and, if so, how can we, as housing professionals, support the professional development of grads who might not necessarily have long-term career aspirations of working in housing or even Higher Ed in general?

CJ Jackson

Yeah, that's a good question. I think it's a trend that we've definitely seen at NC State. I think we've gone so far as to like actively recruit folks from programs who are not necessarily in the higher education program, right? And so I think one of the ways that that we can do this is by, you know, having that intentional conversation. And whether it's like during the interview process or whether it's when they first get the jobs, that kind of help put the ownership on the grads in terms of like, how do you see this assistantship helping you and your professional goals, right? And if they can't answer that question, I think that that's one of the first things that we need to be working on as professionals. Because we don't want them to walk away from this experience and the only thing that they got from the experience in terms of working with us was free tuition or a free apartment. We want the decision to be more impactful than that. So whether it's like working on teams or developing interpersonal skills or whatever it may be, I think it's our responsibility to ensure that we have an intentional conversation to challenge our grads who may not be in the traditional higher education fields to help them understand what they want to take away from this experience and how it connects to their future career goals.

Dr. Stephanie Carter

So at Wake, we don't have a student affairs program, right? So we're a liberal arts institution. The professional programs that our grads are in are sometimes law or divinity or some of the other programs that are there. I mean, we may luck up on a grad who was an RA in undergrad and they were like, "Man, that's a great experience. I want to do that." Bonus. Love it. But most of them have aspirations to do things that are not housing and residence related, which I totally get it. We have a rare

few on the back end who have done the work and they are just like, "Yeah, listen. I can do this for a couple of years." I mean, get you some money, right? You know, live on campus, do the things you can. Anybody can do this work for a couple of years. Do it. But I think for us it is just like CJ said, right? It's about my community directors being able to have conversations with their graduate hall directors about the work that they are doing. One, to make it applicable even to the stuff that they are doing in the classroom that may have nothing to do with student development. That they can make the connections with things and the connections with students, but then also seeing how this applies to them when they want to go be a litigator, or when they want to go lead a church, or when they just whatever they want to do when they get out of Wake. It's about being able to bring that experience together. And for those who decide, "Yeah, this is the work that I want to do," that's great. To me, what seems to be one of the bigger issues now is that our student affairs program- kind of that pipeline is just drying up, right? I think you know, as we continue to try to figure out like you know folks who are graduating from these programs are being ready for entry-level positions or anything else. It's just it seemed to be less and less right? I mean it is sometimes hard to sell this experience. Like this is great work and we need great people to come on campus, but there's always the struggles of, well, the work never seems to stop or the money doesn't, you know, all the things that are out there right now. That's harder to sell now than when I was coming out of my grad program. Look, I love to do this. And you know, there's lots of reasons behind that. But I think the work that people are doing in some of these adjacent fields to us is most certainly and it always will be applicable whether they're trying to be professionals in our field or anything else. At the end of the day, I just want someone who's passionate about the work that they're doing and they can come turn this experience into something to help our students be passionate about living on campus. It's experience that they want them to get, but it is just the wave of the future right now that I think we are just kind of dealing with and trying to make the best of it. You know as much we can.

CJ Jackson

And I think one of the things that's consistent in our community is service to others right now. Like when we go into different fields that may look different, right? So if I'm an engineering major versus somebody who is working in higher education, the way that I serve people may be different. But how I build community, how I serve people and the elements that are important to being able to serve people in an effective way don't change, right? So, you know, my community may not be in person. It may be more online or it may look different, but the core value of service to others is something that's consistent and something that I think universally, we can all agree on that. That's a goal of whatever we may be doing. I can't think of anything right now off the top of my head in which the goal of the business in some way, shape, form or fashion is not service to others.

Savannah Matherly

Right. So our next question. How can someone navigate the politics around leadership roles in professional organizations such as NCHO or SEAHO?

Dr. Stephanie Carter

That's a great question. You know, I think the politics are there. I will say on the- like on the regional level, obviously right now kind of with SEAHO I think that is one of the- I had a listening session, gosh, I guess a few weeks or so ago just kind of whoever wanted to pop in. And you know one of the things that

came up was it, you know, people seem to think they see the same faces doing the same things, right? I mean, I think even on our level with student leaders, right? Like I see the same student leaders doing the same thing. Like that same mentality. It's hard to say, "Well, you're right." But also like some people just don't take the time to apply, because maybe "I'll just never get it." So then we do see the same people. So It's kind of a blessing and a curse. But I think for me, I would always tell people there are so many ways to get involved and you know, obviously CJ can talk about it on the state level. I think sometimes we forget about some of these steps that we can do that kind of get us out there and around and amongst other people, you know? At the end of the day, people want to be able to recognize your name, right? And kind of see and then you start to represent kind of. Well, "I know CJ. He's at NC State." Like they make that connection. What I would love to see more of really on kind of a regional level, too, if some of our newer professionals to the field, or folks who are seasoned, who just may pick to be involved in different ways, or just a little bit more behind the scenes, like how we can bring them more to the forefront. So we're getting ready to have our summer meeting pretty soon in Charleston and one of the things that we are going to talk about is a program that's really been written in kind of our leadership manual of SEAHO Starts that came up. One, to talk about how people got their start in the region and kind of talk about that whole thing, but also just to bring some other faces to the forefront. I would love to see some more people who would like to do programs, maybe that's via zoom format that I can just get some more folks out in front of people just so people can start to recognize other names from other places. Because it's just got to start small. It starts from you putting your program and maybe you get submitted. I mean maybe it does. Maybe it doesn't. You try again, right? Like, just keep doing those little things so people start to recognize your name and everything else. And, you know, there is no like, golden ticket that's gonna punch you to the top. I'll be honest, I sometimes still, once again, am trying to figure out how I got to the seat that I'm sitting in right now because I'm not one of those people who was like, "Let me chase this. This experience." I was nominated and I told myself, "Other people may say no to you. Don't say no to yourself." Right? Go through the process and see what happens. And I was elected. And I'm totally thankful for that opportunity. But I had to get out of my own way and allow some other people who said, "I see something in you. Let's just see where this goes." And just be open to that. But just kind of going through that process. But you know, I had been in this region for a long time, right? Of just being a member, to being on a committee, to then being a committee chair, to getting involved with RELI. Like other things that have kind of came my way because I was persistent and kind of kept shooting my shot. And you know those opportunities- when I applied for RELI faculty the first time, I didn't get it. I was like, "Oh. Alright." But then someone the next year was like, "Oh my gosh, I think you'd be really good at this." And in my mind, I was like, "Well, last year they didn't want me." You know? But then I asked, "You know what? Someone says you'd be great. Let me try." So I put my application back in and I was accepted. So it takes some consistency and it kind of takes that persistence. But there's so many other ways that you can be involved and just kind of continue to be out there and network with folks and, you know, I think sometimes the politics, they there, right? It's in all the work that we do.

CJ Jackson

Yeah, I think this is a- it's a good question, right? I think we as a profession, or at least one of my goals as the President of NCHO, is to provide more opportunities for people to be able to showcase their skills and abilities. And so one of the ways that we've done that is this year for our annual conference, there is typically a smaller group of professionals from the school which is hosting the conference that we pull

on to kind of help pull the conference together. But this year we tried something a little bit different and we took professionals from various schools in North Carolina - so High Point is represented, Peace University, NC State, Duke, UNC- Chapel Hill, and there are couple others that I may not be mentioning - and gave those folks an opportunity to kind of join the committee and be a part of the conference planning team. So those experiences that they are getting are going to propel them to be able to pursue other opportunities, whether it be them having the opportunity to talk about it on the application that they have to complete or whatever that may be. So I think, as a professional, one of the things that we have to do is provide opportunities for people to do it. But people also have to be willing to accept those opportunities as well, right? And not underscoring or, because an opportunity is not a formal position, but moreso just like a task force or committee, like underscoring the importance or lessening the importance that they serve in that role. As I think about where my involvement started from, it really started when I was at Chapel Hill. My supervisor pulled me together and was like, "Yo, let's do a presentation on this. "And so I went to a conference SEAHO conference and did a presentation with my supervisor who was pretty well known in the field at that particular point in time. But I was one of three or four presenters, right? And then that opportunity propelled me and gave me the confidence to, the next year, do a presentation on my own, where I was recognized as one of the top five best at SEAHO nominees in Atlanta. And so and that slowly build upon that, right? So I agree 100% with what Dr. Carter said. Don't tell yourself. Let somebody else tell, you know. Because there were times when I applied for stuff and I didn't get it and folks reached out and gave me feedback. Was like, "Yo, the only reason you didn't get it is because you don't have the years of experience. So submit this same application next year. And you'll be a good-." And I did those things. And I've had a lot of opportunities. A RELI faculty member, I had the opportunity to be a part of RELI. Of course my leadership positions and roles within NCHO and SEAHO and awards and recognitions, all of that has come from me being willing to say yes, even to things that were uncomfortable or things that I didn't know about. I served on committees that I was like, "Yo, I don't know nothing about this, but I'mma hop on this committee and learn," right? And those experiences have proved to pay off tremendously, especially as I think about where I am in my career and to this point. So like the corporate sponsors committee with SEAHO was one of those committees. Like I didn't know nothing about how the corporate sponsor stuff worked, but from being on those committees, seeing what the engagement looked like, participating in different things of that nature, that positioned me well for stepping into this president's role and having to supervise the person who is over corporate sponsors for our NCHO conference coming up in October. So huge opportunity. Don't minimize any responsibilities or any opportunities like Dr. Carter said. Don't ever tell yourself. Make somebody else tell you "no." But being intentional in terms of what you swinging for, right? You probably shouldn't try to be president in the organization before you understand like a baseline So be reasonable in your expectations, too, in regards to what you are pursuing as well.

Savannah Matherly

So our next question, how do you both envision the field making positive changes for its employees in the future?

Dr. Stephanie Carter

I think we have to, right? I mean I think the pandemic was the wake-up call that I think we needed. You know we didn't want it, but we needed it apparently. One, the shake up between the people who left the field and the folks of us who remained behind and just still continued to say like "Yes, we do love

this work. We just don't like the pace in which we have been doing it." You know, all the things that keep going the way they are. You know, in my mind, I think we have to continue to learn that people want flexibility. I mean, most of the reason that people left the field, right, was more flexibility. You know the opportunity to work at home or obviously to make more money that came people's ways that- that's still a whole other conversation that we can have. But people just don't want to feel like their work is their entire life, right? And I think that for- and I'll tell you, I mean, having been in this field for the time in which that I have, that is kind of how I grew up, right? Like the phone was attached to you and you answered it every time it went off. Like you were answering emails. You were answering the phone. You were doing all of those things because it was just kind of impressed upon you that you had to. I kind of kid, you know, a few years ago, I had staff who were saying after 5:00, I don't check my email. And, you know, for me, I was like "What? Wait, what do you mean? After five?" You know, like it was weird. It was almost like "I don't understand, but I get it." Like there was a balance in their life and boundaries that they were like, "This is just it. I don't want you to be emailing me after 5:00 for work stuff." This is important that we have a system of on-call for. But to me, it was kind of a jolt to my system of like "Man, yeah." The way I grew up only worked then in this field. It does not work now. So I think if we are unable to recognize that people need more from us and that they do not want to live and breathe and die ResLife. If we can't change, we're going to continue to struggle to find people to do this work. And I don't want that for us, right? I want people who actually want to come and do the work that we want them to do, have that passion, have that fire continue to burn. But we just don't burn it out or snuff it out, you know, two days in because you're forever on call or we're always short staffed so you're doing 5 different jobs and then we don't want to pay you for that. We just say, "Hey, thanks for your service." Well, that's not it, you know? We have to be able to recognize those things and provide some flexibility as much as we can so that it does not stop the work from getting done. And I think that looks differently in everyone's department on everyone's campus. But I would be shocked if somebody could not say "We just cannot provide any type of flexibility. There can't be anything." To me, that just feels unreasonable in a way that I just think we are trying to control way too much, right? And that can't mean everybody gets to work remote, but there can be some times that we can be flexible. The time in which someone starts their day, as long as someone else is covering some things. I mean, we even here at Wake had conversations about what our kind of "core working hours" are. So when we think about meetings that we are having, we are looking at this window of time that might be from like 10-3 or something. So you know that we're going to have some important meetings that you want people to make sure they're there for. It's during our core working hours Now, yes, do things happen on the other side of that? Absolutely. But when we are thinking about that and when we can be intentional and control things, this is what it looks like. And, to me, that provides a different sense of flexibility that I would have never thought about, like years and years ago. But once again, the pandemic showed us that we could get our work done when people are home or people were in hybrid situations. So the fact that we say "we cannot do it" or "we won't do it" to me just shows we just can't be that rigid as a field anymore or we will never be fully staffed. We will always be trying to figure out how to do this work with less people. And at the end of the day, we're going to continue to drive out good people from this field or just find it harder to attract folks who want to do the work.

CJ Jackson

Absolutely. Dr. Carter hit it right on the head. As I was thinking about this question and hearing Dr. Carter talk, one of the things that I was thinking about is that we have to be able to help prepare our

staffs so that they can articulate what they need from a self-care perspective, but we also have to be able to train supervisors to be able to hear when our staff is advocating what they need from a self-care perspective. By the nature of our work, it can't be 100% remote. Like we got into this field because we wanna interact with people, we wanna have that impact, right? Our field is an in-person, people-serving field and to some extent you have to be present in person to be able to do that. But I do think that there is flexibility that we need that we can offer and we need to examine more in regards to like how do we provide that flexibility. Because, you know, I was definitely, while I didn't like the pandemic, I definitely appreciated, you know, the flexibility that I had in terms of like when I was in between meetings, I was able to kind of do stuff at home that really kind of put my mind at ease and different things of that nature. Or, you know, one of the things that that we do at NC State is we as employees can offer or we can request flexible work arrangements. So, for me, like Thursdays are typically my day where I can work from home if I choose to. Because those are the days that I have therapy and in conversations with my supervisor, if I'm having a tough therapy session, I don't want to have to show up to the office and be in person with people in my face and I'm processing what may have I went through at therapy. So I think it's, again, I think it's important for us to help people examine what they need from a self-care perspective, but also help support supervisors and understand how do they really hear without thinking about what's, especially with some of us, without thinking about some of the things that we were willing to subject ourselves to. For the little bit of money that we was getting, right? And we were like, "If I did it for \$30,000, you could do it for \$45,000." Like we have to reject that thinking. And realize I was one of those people when I got my first full-time position. My students know I was out of the office at 4:45, right? Do not contact me after 4:45 because at 5:00, I was headed to the gym to go play basketball. And so I did have that self-care balancing. And I'm somebody that I don't check emails after 5 p.m. So if you need something from me, you should call, right? Because if you send me an e-mail expecting me to respond to it, I'll get to it the next morning. So I think we do have an obligation to kind of further explore what that looks like. But also engage in an intentional and transparent conversation at our various institutions in terms of what that looks like, too, so that everybody understands what the expectations are.

Dr. Stephanie Carter

Yeah, I think you're right. I think we owe it to the staff. I think we owe it to ourselves. We owe it to the people that we want to recruit to come work for us. Like there's got to be some level of flexibility. Like I said, what you all see whether you pick at your institution, you can figure that out. But I think if you're not even able to have that conversation, I just don't know where you're going to go with it. You just- it's hard, right? To be able to recruit people and recognize that. Because, I tell you what, if you are on any these higher ed, kind of like Facebook pages or stuff, people want to know what salaries are. They want to know what the work environment is like. And people are telling the truth, right? And if there is no sense of flexibility, if there is no sense of like, "they value you as a human being." I'm not sure how you're going to have people come there. And at the end of the day, okay, like everyone suffers, right? When we don't have enough staff to do the work that needs to get done. Everyone feels that. Most importantly, our students do so something's got to give.

Savannah Matherly

Right. Thank you both, Dr. Carter and CJ for answering all those questions. I really enjoyed having the discussion with you all today. So before we close out, I just wanted to end by asking both of you what continues to keep each of you in this field.

CJ Jackson

So one of my favorite quotes comes from Tupac. And he said something along the lines of, "I may not change the world, but I'll spark the brain of the person that will." And I think that's what inspires me to continue to work in higher education. And more specifically, housing, right? Because regardless of what institution you at, most institutions that have a housing department, we have an opportunity to interact with just about... I want to say at least, regardless of the institution, at least 60 to 70% of the students that come through that university in some way, shape, form, or fashion, right? And that gets me excited, right? Because we have an opportunity to make an impact, to leave a lasting impression. In NC State's perspective about 90% of the students that come through our institution because we have a first-year live-on requirement. That is a huge responsibility, but that is an exciting responsibility too. And so, if there is something that we can do from a programmatic perspective to really help continue to help students examine the aspects of education, aspects of themselves that they are or may not be examining in the academic realm, those type of things really excite me about continuing to work in this field. Now coming out of the pandemic, I think we've established this trend. We still have a lot of work to do, especially with the rise of mental health issues being a concern on college campuses across the nation. But the fact that we are able to have a potential impact on so many lives and really have an impact on challenging people to examine who they are as individuals, I think is the thing, I know it's the thing that gets me up every morning and helps me be excited about the work that we do.

Dr. Stephanie Carter

Man, I could truly cosign all of that. It's about the impact, right? I've been doing this work for longer than I probably want to think about at sometimes. But I love it. I've been at different institutions. I've been at Wake since 2017 and, you know, as CJ was mentioning, we also have a live-on requirement. So our students are with us for at least six semesters, if not longer. So the ability to be able to shape the experience that they have through the RAs, through our graduate hall directors, and our community directors and assistant directors is exciting to me because we get to shape what this experience looks like on campus for them and the connections that they make or don't make or and everything else. Like we have a hand in that process. And, to me, I value the experience living on campus. My friends who like to joke about, "it's a dorm." No, it's a residence hall. We build great communities for our students and we want them to be involved. We want them to flourish and all the things that come with it. And, to me, being able to be a part of that experience that is so crucial to folks when they are here means the world to me. Just because it is such a value. You know, and I do this work because I get to work with such great people. So when I have folks who might have been grads for me at some institutions who are professionally working in the field, who still reach out to me or have questions, or I can talk through things like to me, that's great. I appreciate the folks that always continue to use me as a resource or kind of as a thought partner or people that I could reach out to because this field has helped me kind of grow up and find the purpose in the work that I'm doing. And it has changed so much and I love that it has changed. I love being able to be a part of this process and it still excites me to get up every day and do this work. And, you know, when I walk to work or drive to work, to be a part of this campus community, that I'm in, it is just not lost on me to be a part of something larger. And I'm just a small piece of this

little puzzle, but I appreciate the opportunities that have been granted to me. I appreciate the things that have come from the work that I've been able to do, the connections I've made with people, the other opportunities that have opened up. I mean this is never- you know, when I was an RA or just even an undergrad before that, I never would have thought about sitting in the seat that I'm in now or just doing this work. But I'm very thankful that it found me and I'm very thankful that life continues I've kind of like poured into this experience and be a part of it. And what the future may hold, you know, I'm just like, "let's do it." So I'm trying to hang around long enough so I can pay for my kid to go to school, you know? Then we can make some different decisions or whatever life looks like after that. But I enjoy this work and I will always sing the praises of living on campus or just being a part of that experience. And being, as CJ talked about earlier, just being in community with folks who do this work and who are passionate about this work and even when the days get hard, they still understand the bigger picture of what we are doing and that will always make it worthwhile or make the struggles that we have a little more bearable because we know what we're doing and we know who we're doing it for.

CJ Jackson

Yeah. And at the end of the day, I think it's important for us to develop and make sure that the professionals who are coming in behind us have a good base to continue this work as well. And so that's why I'm so passionate about being a role model. That's why I'm so passionate about being a mentor and continuing to invest time, money, and effort into programs like RELI and HTI, and other programs. Because I think it's bigger than us, right? When I decide to walk away and it's all said and done, I want to know that I had an impact on the people coming in behind me. And so as long as I'm in leadership roles, I'm going to continue to advocate for giving people opportunities to showcase state leadership skills and be able to learn and different things of that nature.

Dr. Stephanie Carter

Yeah, 100%. I'm one of those. I want to leave it better than I found it. So when I got here, you know, at my institution, I know what it was like. I want when I leave and walk away, I want it to be better than it was before. And I will know I'm leaving it in good hands and someone else can kind of take it from there. The same thing with our professional associations, right? I want to leave it better than I found it. To be able to take, do my part and then kind of pass the torch to the next person. And I think when it comes down to other stuff like CJ saying, take a chance, right? Maybe you're thinking, "Well, NCHO doesn't have this. Or maybe SEAHO doesn't have this." Like you may have a great idea. Don't just wait on someone to ask you because the ask may never really come. But you may have an idea that you want to share, so reach out to people. I don't want people to feel lost or just like "I'm just a small piece in this little thing." Like you have great ideas, we want to hear them. This is how we keep the passing of our associations, it's how we keep the passing of our institutions going, from people and their great ideas that maybe we just haven't had a chance to think about but maybe you have it and this is your way of being connected in a different way or something that you were doing that may not be a formal title but you have now brought this great idea that we are able to implement and you have brought it to light. And here we are. I mean, we will give you the recognition that is due you if you're bringing these things to us. So don't hesitate to be involved on all the different levels.

Savannah Matherly

Well, thank you both so much again. And I just want to thank everyone that listened to our podcast and hope you enjoyed our first episode. I encourage everyone just to continue engaging in discussion with their colleagues and folks across the state about what you learned or other questions that might have been sparked by listening to this episode. We'll also be hosting a discussion board on the NCHO website. And just look out for details about the next episode of the podcast. So, for now, bye NCHO!