

All Careers Considered, Season 1 Episode 1: Don't Sweat the Small Beginnings with Ellis Dumas

Hey Hoosiers and welcome back to our next episode of All Careers Considered!

If you're new to the podcast my name is Molly Mccurdy, assistant director of strategic alumni engagement for the Walter Center for Career Achievement, and I'm the podcast host for this episode! So today I'm excited to share with you a story from a college for Arts and Sciences alum who graduated from IU Bloomington in 2008. He graduated with a double major in criminal justice and African American and African Diaspora studies (or triple ADS), and he's here to talk today about a little bit about his story kind of finding a job when he graduated in 2008 and how he was able to really persist and build a meaningful career. So, with that being said I'm pleased to introduce you to Ellis Dumas!

Molly: Thanks for being here Ellis!

Ellis: Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited about it.

M: Yeah! So maybe we get started I'd love for you to just tell us a little bit about you where you're from, where it's home for you and what work you do.

E: So I am from Gary Indiana born and raised. I currently reside just a little bit south of Gary Indiana in Crown Point Indiana, but I still service the whole population of the community I grew up in an entire Lake County area. I currently work for the Indiana Department of Child Services. I am a regional manager over what used to be the second largest region but thanks to some good work of our team we've been able to shrink our numbers of children in care and so we're just doing a phenomenal job. So, I currently serve in that capacity as well as a few other things externally. Outside of that, I just love doing the community.

M: Awesome, very cool! I'd love to kind of go back and think about when you were a student at IU to kind of paint the picture for us what kind of things were you involved in on campus and kind of how did those things you were involved in shape your career goals or how you envision your future.

E: So I must admit I probably was involved in a little maybe too much but I literally did some of everything on the campus. I was a part of Black Student Union, I was a part of the college chapter for the NAACP, I served in many leadership capacities with my fraternity starting sophomore year through my senior year. Couple with that the NPHC on the council there was some capacity rolls on there. There's some student board and union board as well as coordinated a few major major events around campus so all of the Atkins floor. Pretty much everything you can probably think of. Groups, of course; there's some things with Groups program, so I kind of made sure that I was involved in a lot of things.

M: Very cool, awesome! So how did that kind of shape sort of what you want to do for your career as you were kind of thinking about jobs and what you're gonna do after graduation?

E: So, it got me to realize that I do very well with people and I'd love to connect with people and I love to engage people that in itself got me kind of out of my shell and accepting that that's okay and that's actually a tree; that is a lot of what businesses, a lot of corporations, lot organizations look for. They want to stack people people down and so if I began to utilize that and think about what made me also happy. I know I found a lot of my happiness and my joy in doing work with people and engaging people, so kind of going into a career that I would be close minded behind the desk probably wouldn't be such a happy thing for me but I were able to find that out while doing these things and while on campus, that this was kind of like something I was good with and people felt comfortable engaging with me around it, so I can use that to my benefit.

M: Yeah, that's awesome. It sounds like you were involved in a lot of things and you obviously have a lot of energy. You're great at working with people so tell me what that was like during 2008 when you're getting ready to graduate, you know, feeling confident I'm gonna get this first job and then you know the recession hits what was that like? Did that impact you? Tell me a little bit more about that.

E: So just like, I'm fresher at least, I talk to all my friends at that time they were graduating around that time then news and media of the fact that it was a recession and that wouldn't have jobs or chopped would be hard to get added this whole new level of anxiety that I think

was beyond what your average college graduate think of right and so of course that crossed all of our minds. My mom friends, mine, my wife's mom, because she also graduated at the same time and it was like what do we do next, where do we go next, but yet still I realized that I had this great quality as well as some of the really good support of my advisor kind of calming those things down, saying hey there is something out there for you you just have to really be okay with that and look for and be confident that it's there. So immediately I realized that okay I realize these companies they're going to be a company that needs a people's person. I just have to go out and find them. It worked out on its own because right when I graduated a part of my people skills got me up at that time a summer job prior to my senior year with the office of financial assistance just working in a call center taking calls and get people ready for financial aid for the beginning of the year but because of our people skills my supervisor that time knew I was graduated and offered me a job right away for time after graduation and office of financial assistance, so I literally saw no gap at all and it was just by doing what I love to do and being me and people see that. They see when you're committed and confident and happy and willing to work hard and they will find you and so I didn't even have to put in a full application. It was a matter of snag you're it and I had that full-time job at that time. Then kind of after a little bit after that time my wife and I decided to go to get her master's, her MSW, at Loyola in Chicago. so we're gonna move back to the region up in Northwest Indiana and at that time that caused the whole nother fear because I was like oh my god I just got this job I have benefits we had children. So I was like okay, I want to make sure everybody still taken care of what am I going to do and it wasn't... I literally had no gap in time to put in an application. Word got around some of the individuals that I had connected with on IU you campus kind of serving. At that time I served and helped out with a campaign, It was governor Mitch Daniels campaign, but he was running for his term and it was my man Mitch's campaign and I helped out a few people there and coincidentally the individual who was like our lead for the area told me about a position with the state with Department of Child Services. He's like hey they have some positions if you're looking at them up there, I come you know, put in a word, just put an application. I put in an application, got an interview the very next weekend and they offered me the job so we literally moved and again I saw no gap in being able to work at all.

M: Yeah that's really awesome! It sounds like a lot of just the connections and relationships you were able to build really kind of helped propel you and those next steps. So that was probably

about 11 or so years ago and since then you've kind of worked your way up through various leadership roles working for the state. So how do you feel like, kind of since then, you've grown either personally or professionally? What are some kind of things you've learned working for the state for this kind of long in your career?

E: Well I gotta admit, when I first got into the Indiana department child services, a lot of people that have been there for years, mentors there, told me "hey get a little bit of experience and move on. This is not... you seem like you're bright, this is not the place you want to get stuck at", things of that sort but again and being a people's person that was like the perfect, perfect people's job. It was along the lines of my what my degree was in, it helped me reengage back with my community and serving in my community and helping people that I actually went to school with and graduated with and that my parents know. So I fell in love with the job and so what was intended to be something that was short-term and move on ended up being long-term and my passion just shine right through and so one of the things my last manager told me before she retired and promoted me was that she said that I can tell that you truly love what you do and you're seeking to do better not because you're trying to promote but but simply because you just want to have better for the community and your job and doing better in your job and so that's why she promoted me and it continued to show on every single level not trying to just "oh I got to get the next position or next raise" but more so how do I make this better while I'm in it. It's kind of always been my mantra and that was something that I really did learn at IU you with my advisers, taking it one class at a time not worried about next semester or how to increase your GPA this very time but let's do really good in the here and now and the next thing will come when it's the perfect time. So everything has its time in the place and that literally has been my transition. I was and I am the youngest regional manager in entire state of Indiana, the only minority regional manager in entire state of Indiana as well, so those are two big factors that play into I believe kind of just a grace of course a little bit of favoritism and my divine power but at the same time too just a lot of working hard and commitment and trying to do the right thing.

M: Yeah, that's really awesome. I like what you mentioned about just kind of sort of taking it one step at a time and really taking advantage of the opportunities that are right in front of you rather than maybe trying to jump three steps ahead without taking that first step so it sounds like you're doing a really awesome job um so I guess to kind of wrap it up um do you have any last words

of advice for students that may be kind of struggling right now to just kind of figure out what might kind of be next for them as they approach graduation?

E: Well again, I think my story is so ideal in the perfect time that a lot can be going on in this world but you were literally born and went to IU and graduated and for just the time as this and trust me, there's going to be something there for you that fits just for you. Don't sweat small beginnings. I always share this with all of my people that come under me other people that work for the agency when they say "I'm just a family case manager". No, you are THE family case manager. The one that's going to impact somebody's life and so if you think about how big of an impact you can be at the very beginning, no way in my mind that I ever fathom that I would be over all of those that I once were peers with and so don't sweat the small beginnings. Be okay with that and just trust me everything will be fine.

M: That's awesome. That's great advice! Thanks for sharing and for those of you students that are listening right now Ellis I'm pretty sure I think you're on the Walter Center success Network so if students want to follow up or ask more questions or just connect students feel free to reach out to Ellis on the Walter Center success Network. So I think that wraps up my questions thank you so much for being here Ellis. I love to keep hearing more about your story and just getting to know you.

E: Alright thank you so much more, I appreciate you having me.

M: No problem, thanks everyone for tuning in to another episode of all careers considered and we'll see you next time.