

Heart of a Tiger: Be That Person

I like to start my day reading “Light’s Daily Dose.” Author Light Watkins’ daily message is short and impactful. The other day, as I was thinking about new year’s resolutions – the hopes and aspirations for each new year. I was inspired by a Light’s Daily Dose email entitled, “Be that person.”

It begins with Light sharing a tweet from an author named Clint Smith. It said, “One of the reasons I’m a writer today is because I had a teacher in third- grade who looked at my poem about clouds and said, “you can be a writer when you grow up.” Powerful words of inspiration and aspiration.

I smiled and thought immediately about the people in my life who encouraged me. And I thought about the truly remarkable ethic of care that guides this university. It is exactly why our strategic plan is named “Unlocking Untapped Potential.”

Take, for example, this letter written to a freshman seminar instructor by Logan – a May 2018 graduate. And I know in my heart the inspiring message that was the essence of this letter could have been written to anyone at Fort Hays State University:

I just wanted to reach out to let you know that I am doing well. My life is busier and fuller than I ever could have imagined. And through it all, I have never forgotten what you did for me. During freshman seminar, we took a self-evaluation quiz. Afterwards, I met with you in your office, where we learned that the evaluation gave me a 25% chance of ever earning a college degree. I was devastated. Until I heard your response: ‘That’s a bunch of BS.’

Those words gave me motivation like you wouldn’t believe. You gave me confidence that I could actually graduate. You even gave me a graduation tassel to keep me focused on that goal. This past May, I received a Bachelor of Science degree in Geology, a minor in Business Administration, and a certificate in Geographic Information Systems.

I never thought I would be half as successful as I have already been, and each time I achieve something new in my career, the first thing I think of is my time at FHSU, sitting in your office, scared that I would never graduate. I think of the motivation and confidence you provided that put me in the position I am in today. That graduation tassel still hangs on my wall as a reminder of all the opportunities I had because you invested in me.

Hearing these testimonies to our university’s ethic of care never gets old. I savor each remarkable story as my heart basks in gratitude for this community and our relentless focus on creating a university with a level of personalized care that connects deeply and sincerely and seeks to lift others up.

As Light wrote, “the world is full of folks discouraging, criticizing, and snuffing out dreams and hopes in the name of being realistic. But it can always use more people who encourage and inspire.”

I cannot think of a better way to lead forward into 2023 than to resolve to be a force for good in the lives of all who cross our paths this year. Won't you join me to be that person for someone today?