

Sept. NTSP Newsletter  
Interview with David Wright  
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Sept. Newsletter Lead-In for David Wright and Marshaya Rountree:

If there is one thing that non-traditional students David Wright and Marshaya Rountree have in common it is the philosophy of being open in life—open in learning new things and open in changing life direction.

David Wright Story:

Graduate student David Wright has everything in his life planned down to the minute—whether that is studying for class, spending time with family, or mentoring other students. Often highly organized people find change difficult if not impossible, but David shows us he is open to life, open to change.

David's return to UALR after a 20-year break started out as a casual joke made with family at the dinner table. David was a casualty of the economic crisis of 2010. When his company where he did medical billing and collections downsized by half, David, with 15 years' experience, lost his job. He diligently searched for a new job, but no one wanted to pay him for his experience. Finally, one night he joked with his family that since he couldn't find a job, maybe he would just go back to school. Now it is four years later, and David is in the graduate program, preparing to become a marriage and domestic violence counselor.

David relayed a story about one of the toughest hurdles he overcame in coming back to school,

"I was already nervous after coming back after 20 years. And I was standing outside Stabler Hall waiting on my first class to start, and I just got an overwhelming sense of anxiety. I even called my wife and ... said, 'I can't do this. These kids are just intimidating. I don't have the background for this. I just don't think I'm going to make it. I'm too old.' She convinced me to just tough it out that first day ... After the first day I felt a whole lot better. I felt more confident."

David is not just about being a student. One of David's favorite things at UALR is being a mentor with the Non-Traditional Student Programs. He remembers the lack of resources and support that he had and how nervous he was when he came back to college. For David, becoming a mentor was a good opportunity to help other students facing similar difficulties. He says,

"I don't want anyone else to go through what I went through as a non-traditional student. I want everybody I come in contact with to succeed and have the skills and the tools they need to succeed."

David manages his stress by being "incredibly organized." At the beginning of each semester, when David gets his classes' syllabi, he lays out every moment in his planner, from when he is going to eat to when he is going to study to when he is going to make time for that other important part of David's life.



David is sure to make time for his family, particularly his grandsons. He and his wife like to take them swimming and bowling. David knows the importance of family even in the midst of the busyness of school.

David's advice for other students is,

"You're just as capable as any of the other younger students to come in here and succeed. Don't give up. And don't be afraid to just reach out and ask for help or guidance."