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Lending a Hand into the Field

I interviewed a professor that I had last semester in one of my beginning social worker classes. Her name is Dr. Ashley Toland and she is an assistant professor at the University of West Florida. I absolutely loved sitting down with her and getting her advice and feedback on my journey as an undergraduate and into the future of my career. I cannot wait to continue working with her, especially on my thesis project for honors. I see her as such a guiding figure that can only help further my development and knowledge as a social worker.

From this experience, I learned that I am on the right track and that with a few more tools in my belt, there is so much that I can do that I can achieve. There is also a saying that I have been hearing for a while that Dr. Toland seemed to also believe in “every social worker from here to Tallahassee knows one another”. She highlighted that reaching out and making a network for yourself is so important as a social worker. For a long time, I have known that I wanted to be a social worker and sit down with Dr. Toland did not necessarily confirm that for me because I had known for so long this is what I wanted to do. While it did not provide me more inspiration to pursue social work it did highlight the diversity of social work. There is just so much to explore in this field that in two, five, or ten years I can change trajectory and work with another demographic.

One thing that Dr. Toland really emphasized, was to go out and network within our community. Not only with other social workers but to network with organizations and get your name known within the community so that you can help everyone to your best ability. I do get a bit of anxiety about reaching out and trying new things but it is really important as a social worker to make a network so I will have to set out of my comfort zone every once and a while. Recently I have had a taste of what a potential career in social work could look like and I found I do really like it. When I sat down with Dr. Toland we were able to discuss our experiences and reflect on the good and the bad times. Good times were unanimous. Some of the most rewarding work that we do is when we see the people working to make a change in their lives for the better. It can look different for each person but seeing them actively strive to make a change for the better to make sure that they live healthy fulfilling lives is just heartwarming.

An E-Portfolio is practically essential in my future. For graduate school, I will need an E-Portfolio, for most jobs I will need one. This interview set up what I need to focus on to make sure that my E-Portfolio looks competitive to get into amazing graduate programs and interview for amazing job opportunities. Plus having a source where every part of your academia and work experience are compiled in a singular space can only help in the future.