

Unhurried

I came to Emporia State knowing it's the best University across the globe for educators. Initially, my goal was to finish my degree in secondary English education as soon as possible to return to my hometown of Liberal, KS and serve my community. As I came to ESU with plenty of college credit under my belt, I was on track to graduate in three years. This was exciting for me! I have typically been known to excel, so what greater accomplishment than finishing college early? To my advantage, Emporia State's flat-rate tuition facilitated this process. To benefit even more from flat-rate tuition, I decided I'd take some classes in the Health, Physical Education, and Recreation department. Health has always been a passion of mine—and aside from teaching, I also want to coach. Thus, these extra health classes easily turned into a minor in Health and Human Performance, another one of ESU's outstanding programs.

Yet, with a minor tagged on to my BSE in English, I was still set to graduate early. Just over a year before my expected graduation date, however, I had a moment of epiphany. When reading my assigned text for the week in my Intro to World Literature class, I became particularly intrigued by two passages in the module on Chinese literature. The first excerpt that spoke to me comes from Confucius' *Analects*. In *Analects*, Confucius states: "The best are those born with knowledge, next come those who get to know through learning." This resonated with me, as I felt it accurately described who I am. Naturally, I have always been bright. As a toddler, I knew quite a bit for my age; as a middle-aged child, I easily received good grades; but as a secondary school student, however, I worked hard for my grades. College was no different. I won't deny that I have an easier time picking up material than most of my peers, but I still must devote plenty of hours to creating work I'm proud of and earning grades I want. Thus, I've

realized that I am not smart simply because of my natural ability—I am smart because I’m motivated to truly *learn*.

When it comes to learning, I’ve always been quick and eager to expand my knowledge and skills. Hence, another driving factor towards my intent to finish college quickly. This brings me to the second quote that struck me, from the writings of Zhuangzi. This adage read: “Great understanding is broad and unhurried; little understanding is cramped and busy.” I had to pause for a moment, realizing that perhaps my plan to finish school soon, though for good motive, may in fact not be the best decision for me. In Zhuangzi’s words, “cramped and busy,” is what would describe my schooling at the time. Yes, I was understanding material and earning excellent grades, but did this mean I was achieving mastery to become the best version of myself—the best educator I could be? Was I going to experience enough before graduating to feel truly prepared for my career? “*Unhurried*” spun around in my head the rest of that week. *Why* was I in such a hurry?

These wise passages came to me at the right time. At this point in my fourth semester, I was preparing to enroll for the fall of my final year and ready to apply for Phase I, the professional semester for secondary education majors before student teaching. I was going to complete my minor in Health and Human Performance that May, which I had mixed feelings about. I truly enjoyed my classes in the program and felt quite attached to my instructors. I slept on the readings of Confucius and Zhuangzi. I consulted with my professors, my peers, and my parents. I reflected on my progress as a student at ESU and as a future professional. *Who did I want to be after my time at this University?* I concluded—an educator, a coach, a leader, a role model, and most importantly, a difference-maker.

I realized that in order to become this person, I had to maximize my time at Emporia State. At ESU, I found my happy place. I worked on campus at the Undergraduate Admissions Office, which paved the way for me to become an ESU Ambassador—one of the most rewarding service leadership organizations. I was a Spanish Editor for our student newspaper *The Bulletin*, which gave me the opportunity to do other translation work—helping me maintain my first language, which I know will be an essential tool for my career. I was hired as a Zumba instructor at the Student Recreation Center, which helped me help others fall in love with and learn about fitness. I was a part of the group who worked to reinstate the ESU Stingers dance team, which gave me the only thing missing for me at this University. I was receiving instruction from the most devoted professors in both my departments—English and Health—learning more than just what was taught inside four walls of a classroom. There was still *more than plenty* of room for me to grow and thrive at this school, and that is why I made the crucial decision to slow down and enjoy the process of what I was experiencing here.

I officially added a second major in Health and Human Performance to my name. This meant I would no longer graduate in the timeframe I once planned on, but I was more than okay with that. Now in my fourth and penultimate semester, I can't be any more thankful for what this University has given me—for the support from the staff, the care from my closest friends, and the opportunities from the programs. Thanks to these factors in combination with flat-rate tuition, I'm confident I will walk the stage at graduation in December ready to change lives through teaching, coaching, and simply practicing the leadership I have learned during my time as a Hornet—*unhurried*.