

“Student Affairs Talk” • Madison Bolick, senior • Jan. 13, 2020

Q: Thank you for joining me today, Madison. I want to get right into what brought you to Clemson --- where you grew up, what sort of colleges you applied to --- what made Clemson stand out?

Bolick: I am from Greenville, South Carolina, so Clemson’s always kind of been my next-door neighbor. I’m the youngest of three and both of my older siblings went to Clemson. I knew I didn’t want to be the oddball that went somewhere else. So, I had a little bit of pressure to get in. But when I got in, I was obviously ecstatic. I didn’t really consider any other options past that point. My other option was USC, but obviously, that wasn’t something I was inclined to do.

Q: Were you real active in high school, in sports or student government?

Bolick: I was. I ran track and cross country year-round and did cheerleading for a little bit. I didn’t like that as much because I like fast-paced things. I was in student government; I was secretary my senior year. That’s ironic, because last year at Clemson as a junior, I was senate secretary. I kind of fell into similar things I had been doing in high school.

Q: I meet some students who are natural go-getters and others who work their way toward being involved on campus. When you came in as a freshman, did you have that mindset that you wanted to be an active student here at Clemson?

Bolick: I did. My freshman year was crazy. And I know everyone says their freshman year is kind of their worst year. You’re not sure about getting involved, even though you know you want to. My oldest brother was still at Clemson because he did a fifth year academically. He was involved in student government. He kept nagging and nagging, saying ‘I want you to fill my legacy and keep doing what I’ve been doing.’ So, that’s when I applied for senate. I was on senate for three years, but I was thinking it wasn’t enough for me. I wanted to grow in some positions on campus. So, that’s when I ran for senate executive board. I did that last year. And this year, I’m a Cabinet member for Logan (Young) and Andrew (Kwasny) as activities director. It’s a whole new world of work, but it’s so much more fun than what I was doing. I’m excited to have moved in that direction.

Q: You mention the breakdown of senate and senate exec --- explain to me exactly what that means. When you come in as a freshman senator, what all does that entail?

Bolick: There’s a difference between floor senators and senators based on colleges. There are different roles. When you’re elected through the general election, there are senators at-large, which is strictly by vote. And then senators by college, which is the top for each college. The structure of it has been changing the past few years. If you’re just a floor senator — and there’s 64 of them — you have a seat and you’re a voting member of the body. Within the body, there are chairs for each committee. That’s appointed internally by senate. Exec has five members, including the VP of the senate. And that’s another round of internal elections.

Q: You were appointed a Cabinet position as activities director. What does that title mean?

Bolick: I knew I wanted to be activities director for certain reasons. It was given to me with a lot of open decisions to be made. So, that was fun but also a little daunting. A lot of activities in the past have been kind of burnt to the ground and were not really well attended or fun. So, my task was to revamp these things and make them things that students want to go to and spend their money on. This year, my biggest thing was the Miss Homecoming pageant. Crazy. You wouldn’t think it would be that much work, but I had a full-time, pageant mom job. Running the venue, getting the judges, choreographing all the dances, the finances --- everything comes down to my shoulders. That’s a lot. But I have a committee, it’s made up of 25 people this semester. That’s been really helpful and a lot of fun. Another thing we did last semester that was a success was an expansion of Tiger Rag Shag. It started two years ago as our Homecoming dance. In the past it’s been a little unattended. No one talks about it or wants to go. But this year, we decided to make it more like a function and invite the entire school. We had it at Tiger Park, had a live band and swing dancing and it was really well attended. That was a success and I hope it will continue when I’m gone next year.

Q: Tell me about the bond you formed with some of the members of Cabinet; what that relationship-building was like and how you formed some of your best friends?

Bolick: I have made a lot of friends, and some of my best friends. I know people think CUSG is just a giant clique. When you’re spending this much time with people, you naturally grow together. We have retreat, formal --- things that are fun. Definitely some of my best friends are in student government. It’s been a blast, especially now that I’m on my way out. I’m really sad to leave this part of campus.

Q: I think CUSG has allowed you to form relationships with administrators as well. Dr. (Chris) Miller in Student Affairs, specifically?

Bolick: That has been one of the coolest experiences from the positions I’ve held, being able to have those relationships and connections with administrators. College has been the most challenging phase of my life. I’ve had a lot of tragedy, highs and lows. Having Dr. Miller be there for me not only as a resource, but also as a mentor, really transformed the way college could have gone for me. So, I’m really grateful for him.

Q: You’re active in other parts of campus as well, specifically with Legacy Day and Give Day. What has been your role in those annual celebrations?

Bolick: I’ve been more of a participant in those things. Legacy Day has been really fun. You’re paired with donors; you have dinner and talk about your college experience. I love to tell my Clemson story because of my major and the things I’m involved in. Donors are really interested. It’s a great time to tell more about yourself, but also to learn about them and their history and when they went to Clemson. There’s give and take about that. And Give Day is the same.

Q: Let’s talk about your major. You are enrolled in a very interesting and challenging major, Construction Science and Management. Why did that field interest you?

Bolick: I like to tell people I have a true story and a fake story I made up, because people ask me this question all the time. My fake story is that it runs in my family, but it’s

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actually true. My grandpa was a contractor; my uncle and cousins were all contractors. I was always there, it seemed pretty cool and they were successful. When I applied to Clemson, and I knew there wasn't any other option, I considered health science. But when I toured, construction science seemed cool and laid-back, it sounded fun. And health science said I had to take organic chemistry (laughs). From that point on, my 17- or 18-year old self said, 'Construction it is.' I had intentions of not liking it and wanting to switch, but I came here and I loved it. Now I'm here.

Q: Have you faced any roadblocks in your major. It seems like it's probably dominated by males, if we're being honest.

Bolick: Yeah, especially as a freshman and it's all men. Obviously, I stand out and that was always awkward for me. I don't like to stand out and have people looking at me. That feeling of pure discomfort walking into class every day got better and better. But it slowed down my comfortability in college, but I'm also thankful for it because it's shown me a lot about myself and helped me to grow more. And that's what the industry is like and it's how I'm going to feel most of the time. So, it's prepared me more for what lies ahead. I'm really excited for the challenge and don't regret it all. Hopefully it will go well for me.

Q: Construction science is part of the College of Architecture, Arts and Humanities and you serve as an ambassador for the college. Can you give us a sense of what that means?

Bolick: It's a general tour guide role. You're categorized based on your major. When people come in, I give them a tour of our CSM department, introduce them to our advisor and department head, and show them classrooms. My favorite part is when potential women's applicants come in and they see me and think, 'What is this major really like?' Our other tour guide right now is a female and is blonde like me. I'm sure they're thinking it's not really the major they thought it was based on reputation. But it's really cool and is an awesome way to pour myself back out. I tell a story of how a tour guide a year above me was a tour guide like me and she made me feel like it was going to be okay and awesome. She's the only reason

I chose CSM. I thought, 'She did it, why can't I?' I became a tour guide in the hopes that I'd be able to do the same thing for other girls coming in. But also, for guys, CSM is a major that no one knows about. There's so much money in the industry, there's opportunity right now. Everything's booming. I definitely think there needs to be more awareness about it, so that's slightly my way of pouring back into it right now.

Q: I'm interested in your viewpoint on this subject. As a CSM major, what is your take on the current state of Clemson? Buildings popping up left and right, Core Campus, Douthit Hills and other facilities have been added since your freshman year. Is that exciting to you, or does it bother you as a student because you can't get around campus as easy?

Bolick: I have a little bit of mixed feelings, because I love the old Clemson. I miss Clemson House, where both of my brothers lived. I always wanted to live there, but the year that I came they stopped it. I understand I empathize with the concept of not wanting Clemson to change, but if we're going to keep growing and want to keep up with our peer institutions, that's just a reality of the situation. Things like Cadden Chapel and the new business school ... I'm so excited about. I really do think that's going to benefit our campus a ton. I am upset about the closed roads, in terms of getting to class (laughs). But, I'm excited for the growth here.

Q: We're releasing this podcast on the day of the National Championship game versus LSU. Which Tigers are coming out on top tonight?

Bolick: The Clemson Tigers! No questions asked.

Q: Have you been a big football fan your entire life, or during your time at Clemson?

Bolick: My dad went to NC State, and my first Clemson game was at NC State. I was really confused, because we grew up with USC versus Clemson. I was really confused because my dad was over here cheering for NC State. I'm over here thinking, 'I think I like Clemson.' As soon as my brothers came to Clemson, it was pretty obvious that my whole family was a Clemson family. I think it

was 2012 when my oldest brother first came here, so it's been a while.

Q: Have you made it out to any of the championship games?

Bolick: I have, and I was actually in New Orleans the last time (2017 Sugar Bowl). It's 50-50 right now, because of the idea of missing class and all that. Because I got to go, I at least feel better about not going this time. But, I haven't been to any of the times we've won the National Championship. So, maybe it's best that I'm not going (laughs). But, I'm very excited. I think it'll be a good time. I was actually downtown Clemson the last two times we won, which is equally cool. Both of my brothers were here the first time we won, so it was pretty rare that all three of us were here together. We won the National Championship and were all within 20 feet of each other. Pretty unique experience, for sure.

Q: In thinking of everything that's taken place during your time here at Clemson, how would you best describe your experience using just a few words?

Bolick: I think the first thing is growth. I was an entirely different person because of multiple factors. They always say that college is a time that you grow and you experiment. You find out things about yourself. I think that's so true. I'm grateful for Clemson because it's navigated me in a certain direction. It might've been a different way if I'd gone to a different school. But, I'm definitely pleased with the way things have gone amidst things that haven't gone my way.

Q: When you're not studying or participating in campus activities, what sort of things do you enjoy doing with your free time?

Bolick: I love napping. And that's such a sad thing to say. Napping is just so great. I also go to the Brooks Center. A little-known secret about Clemson is there's a bunch of pianos down in Brooks that we have access to. I like to play piano. I like to paint. I have a lot of little side hobbies that I don't have much time for, but when I do, I really enjoy it. Apart from napping, because that's definitely No. 1.