

## “Student Affairs Talk” • Melondy Munson, Clemson senior • Nov. 25, 2019

**Q: Melondy, you’re a senior from Irmo, South Carolina. You’re right there from the shadows of the University of South Carolina; so how did you end up at Clemson University?**

Munson: I really struggled with where I wanted to go to college. I came here for a tour, and as soon as I stepped foot on campus, I just knew. I was told that when picking a college, chase after peace. I felt that when I came up here. The tour guide was relaxed and comfortable and spoke to many people. I just thought, “Wow, this is a place I could really see myself.” I felt joy, and I just knew it was somewhere I wanted to go.

**Q: Were you a junior or senior in high school at that time?**

Munson: Oh, this was my senior year. It was spring break.

**Q: So, you went down to the wire, then?**

Munson: Yeah (laughing).

**Q: And you were at Dutch Fork High School, right?**

Munson: Yes.

**Q: You say you felt peace here. Is it something you can explain? Was it the scenery, the people? What was it that was the magical combination?**

Munson: Everyone just seemed so happy. And the spirit. That’s probably one of my favorite things about Clemson. The vast majority, if not everyone, just loves this school. You see orange on Solid Orange Fridays. Tailgates and families. Everyone is so connected and just happy all the time. And I really wanted that. I guess that’s the best way to describe it.

**Q: You carry a lot of that over into what you do today. You’re known for your involvement on campus in a couple of different student orgs. You’re in FCA. You’re in Central Spirit. So, let’s talk about FCA first. Why was that important to your college experience?**

Munson: Just like joining any other organization, when you come to college, you want to find people with similar ideas and values and beliefs. But at the same time, part of coming to college is being

challenged. Changing some of your ideas or opinions and what not. FCA kind of helped me do that. But, it kept me grounded.

Yeah, a lot of my thoughts and ideas changed. But, as a person, I didn’t change. I’m very much a different person from when I first came on campus, but I’m also still the same person --- if that makes sense. I feel like I’ve met a lot of people who helped me discover more of who I am than what I did previous to coming to college.

**Q: FCA is pretty big, right?**

Munson: Hundreds, maybe even a thousand. We get together every Thursday night at 9:19.

**Q: If you’re listening to this podcast and you’re a Clemson student, you’re probably familiar with Melondy because she takes a front row seat at football games, volleyball games, basketball games. I’ve seen you dancing, waving flags. You have a great time in your role with Central Spirit. Have you always had that much passion?**

Munson: I have always had a lot of energy. My parents can attest to that. I’ve always liked sports, but I wouldn’t say I’ve always had this kind of enthusiasm for it. I’d say Clemson probably brought more of it out of me, because I love Clemson so much. Going to these sporting events is a way to outwardly express that. Also, they have good music! And I love to dance, so I can’t help it.

**Q: You’re an incredible dancer; I’ve noticed it first hand at some of the athletics events I’ve been working. I recently came across a few pictures in our university database where you were actually waving a giant flag for Central Spirit on the field at your final home football game. Can you describe the emotion of what that’s like and how cool it must be to be down there and follow in the footsteps of some of your friends?**

Munson: To quote Dabo (Swinney), the intensity of the moment is very real. Honestly, it’s indescribable. You feel really proud to go to Clemson. It was kind of a happy ending. You know how in a fairy tale they say “happily ever after?” It felt like that. The perfect way to top off all my time in Clemson. To share my love for Clemson and wave the flag in front of thousands of

fans. There truly are no words; it was an incredible experience.

**Q: Central Spirit has been obviously very important to you; have you held leadership positions within the organization?**

Munson: I’m actually the marketing director. I’m in charge of promoting all Central Spirit events, and I also do the “Beat” stickers for football games.

**Q: Very cool. I know those are popular as well. The first couple of years you were at Clemson, you were part of the PEER program. Tell us more about what that is specifically, and why you chose to be part of it?**

Munson: Before I came to college, I did a program called “Foundations in Research Experience.” It’s through Clemson, and I did it for two weeks. The PEER WISE program runs it. That’s how I got involved in PEER. Basically, it’s kind of like a support group for minority students that want to go into STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields. I started out as a biology major before realizing I did not want to do that. The program has tutoring and test banks. Just a really good community of support. Because it can be hard. A lot of the students are first-generation college students, so they don’t have a lot of people in their family to talk to about this kind of stuff. Being a minority at a huge university like Clemson, it gives you an environment where you can connect to people who are similar to you.

**Q: Also, your freshman year, you said you were involved in the Alternative Break Program on a trip to Louisiana. Where were you going, and what was it for?**

Munson: We went to Baton Rouge to do some flood relief community service. It was incredible. First of all, Louisiana is unlike any place I’ve ever been. The culture, the food, the music --- absolutely phenomenal. It was just a great experience. We were doing jobs like removing moldy insulation from people’s houses, ripping out parts of walls that had water damage, removing furniture. And these people were praying for us! Here they were, part of this tragic event, and they were praying for us and giving us encouragement. I was just

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shocked that they would be so kind after going through a tragedy. To think of us, ahead of themselves. That was really cool to experience. I did community service in high school, but I've been able to travel and do it here at Clemson. I've also been to Baltimore and Memphis with FCA. Some really cool opportunities.

**Q: You said something very interesting in an email to me the other day. It cracked me up, actually. You were a member of the Clemson Boxing Club. I know we have 500 student clubs and organizations here, but that's not one I've encountered yet. What was that all about?**

Munson: It actually started because I was going to fencing. I wanted to try fencing because of the movie *The Parent Trap*. So I went and absolutely loved it, and it was a huge time commitment. So that was disappointing. So I ran into a girl who lived on my hall freshman year, and she was doing the boxing club and said I should try it. I said, “Cool.” I really liked it and stuck with it. I have an American flag boxing gloves.

**Q: Was it a lot of sparring? What all went into it?**

Munson: It was mostly just learning the positions in the beginning. Then you do some light sparring. I didn't stick with it for too terribly long, but I did enjoy it.

**Q: One of the reasons we know each other is through your role as a UPIC intern here in Student Affairs. You're working in the publications area and with Campus Banner + Design, serving as one of the photographers. What do you enjoy about the work here?**

Munson: When I was younger, I used to love to tell stories. I wrote “books” all the time. I always liked stories. I still do. Now I just do it through photography. Working with University Relations and now Student Affairs Publications, I've gotten to go to places and events I wouldn't have if I hadn't been a photography intern. I've experienced a different side of Clemson, and told part of its story. It's been interesting and has helped me develop my photography skills. Coming in beforehand, I couldn't tell you what aperture was or

anything like that. I have also made a website portfolio, which has helped me develop professionally. So, that's been cool.

**Q: Is there anything you've learned about the Division of Student Affairs that you didn't know prior to working as an intern?**

Munson: For one, I had no idea how big this division is. There are so many departments. Oh my goodness. I really liked the other day when I went to an event known as Experience: IMPACT. I like that Student Affairs has people from different departments coming to talk about what they're doing, so that everyone can be involved. I don't know if other divisions do that as well, but I found it really interesting. And I think y'all do that pretty often, right? That was cool.

**Q: Yes, we have recently been a lot more intentional in holding staff events like that so you can not only highlight the work that others are doing, but also to celebrate our successes as well. Shifting gears to academics, you shifted out of STEM and into psychology. Have you started thinking about a career, because you're almost to that point that you've got to start figuring out that next step?**

Munson: Yes. I actually accepted a job offer from a marketing firm in Greenville. I shifted to business from STEM. I chose to major in psychology because I wanted to study consumer behavior. I wanted to come into it with a different perspective and different insight than most marketing majors would have. I also really love people, and psychology is the study of people. It's taught me different ways to think and to be more empathetic and sympathetic. To be able to put myself in the shoes of other people and really understand where people come from and why they think how they think and do what they do. I took some industrial psychology and organizational psychology classes. That gave me a good edge on how to work with people in the workplace. I think that'll be really helpful for the real world. Not that being a marketing major wouldn't. But psychology has prepared me in different ways.

**Q: You mentioned accepting a position. Are you graduating in December?**

Munson: I'm graduating in December.

**Q: You really are down to the final stages, then. Is it excitement for the next step, or nervousness? Where are your emotions right now?**

Munson: Honestly, there's no better way to describe it than bittersweet. I'm excited to get out into the real world to put what I've learned into practice. But I know when I leave Clemson, a piece of my heart is going to stay here forever. A ship in a harbor is safe, but that's not what ships are built for. It's bittersweet. It's my favorite place in the whole world. So it'll be hard to leave. But I feel like I couldn't have gone to a better university. I couldn't be more proud to say I graduated — when I do graduate — from Clemson.