

David Westley

Program Coordinator of Student Life



Jessica: What do you do? How does your role serve students?

David: In general, my role for the department is to assist our program areas with any and all things purchasing, travel, hiring, and campus procedure/policy related. I work with a small team that works at the Student Life front office. We receive students looking for a variety of resources, and we direct, refer, and assist those students online and in-person. During Covid-19 remote operations, my role has shifted from in-person, to assisting our Publications Coordinator, and Student Life staff with communications to students via social media and Canvas.

Jessica: How long have you been an Otter?

David: I came to South Seattle College right after graduating from Southern Oregon University in 2014, and I'm still here. That's almost 7 years now.

Jessica: What do you love about South?

David: When I was looking for jobs as a new Seattle dweller, and new college graduate, I knew that I wanted to work for a small college/university preferably because that was what I was used to. I thrived with small classes, and small work teams. South has been that for me professionally. But ultimately, it's the people that work at South that make it for me, especially my BIPOC colleagues.

Jessica: What is something that you are enjoying doing right now?

David: With South being in remote operations, I have enjoyed having my own kitchen to cook in for meals. My commute would regularly have me out the door pretty early, and I wouldn't always have the time to make myself food in the mornings. So, meals, and a much shorter commute.

Jessica: Could you share something you learned, that you wish you knew sooner in your academic career?

David: Yes. Your degree itself is important, but what your degree is in doesn't necessarily determine where you will end up. After finishing my degree in cultural anthropology, I knew that the field was not something I was interested in pursuing further. However, I gained many skills in communication, and how to understand community structures, histories, and systems. These, along with the work of getting a degree, were so helpful to me in quickly navigating complex systems like colleges and universities. So, get the degree.

Jessica: Could you share a bit about your academic/career journey?

David: Sure. I grew up in the Bay Area, California. I struggled to get into colleges in California due to my grades, and SAT scores. I had an opportunity to attend a university in Oregon, Southern Oregon University, and took it. Though, I was determined at the time to get back home because I missed my friends and family. The motivation to connect with others helped me to network at the college, and I found my place as a student and student employee.

I experienced a lot of racism and discrimination growing up. And for some reason, I thought it would end when I got to college. However, in working as a student ambassador for my university, I realized that diversity was often just used as a metric to recruit and justify connecting with BIPOC students and communities. And that the institutions of higher education were not well equipped to retain those students or support staff of color that were intermediaries. I didn't have as critical of a lens as I do now, but that experience has helped me in connecting with our BIPOC students at South in navigating our college as they work toward their degrees and help them with the challenges they inevitably face.

Jessica: Anything else you would like to share about yourself?

David: I greatly enjoy connecting with the students at South. When we are able to return to campus and serve students again in person, please feel free to stop by the Student Life front office and say hi.