CHRIS O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Good morning, and welcome again to another edition of Let's Talk Ed with Professor Chris. If you have not subscribed, please do. Today is gonna be another special show here, trying to get you all more help. We've talked to advisers, we've talked to ombudsman. I'm not sure who else is left except this one.

Today, we're talking about success coaches. What is that? I didn't have a success coach when I was in college. So, you have it. Here's more formation about that. Stay tuned, and again, please subscribe. Please help me in welcoming my own good friend, Mr. Michael Eure.

MICHAEL EURE: Hey, thank you so much for having me.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Michael, you and I go way back, so I want this to be very, very friendly, very comfortable. I just know how much you love to help students, but let's start with, there's a question I ask everyone on my, on my show. In college, basically, I want you to walk us through your, your journey a little bit and then you could end up with how you got into success coaching. Is that something you always wanted to do it?

EURE: It was not something that I, I even knew existed until Wake Tech.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Really?

EURE: So, when I looked up the position, I was very sure that lots of people would want to do that because I used to do my work with the Registrar's Office. I did adult learning admissions. So, I've been involved with colleges, and I'd never heard of that. So, I said this is the kind of job they're paying me to do what I did extra with students who were getting, you know, disenchanted with the process. I would walk them through a little bit more. And I said, "I'd love this. This would be the perfect job for me." But I know that 1,000 people apply for it, so I was very surprised when I made it to the finals, and I have enjoyed it ever since, even though it's changed.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK. So, tell us, what is a success coach?

EURE: In simple terms…

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Or who is?

EURE: Yes. Many schools have them now, and, but they are slightly different. But the main thing is they connect students to resources, and you make the connection with them first, early on. And I will say Wake Tech has went through a lot of different ways to get to the new students, and the goal is to have every student have a success coach. And, as you know, starting this fall, all the students in your major, for example, engineering, would have their very own success coach, and they will have advisors, and they will have faculty. And we're gonna do these care teams. That's the new model of Wake Tech, that Wake Tech cares.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK. So, you mentioned, almost seemed like you were expecting my next question, which is, when we hear success coaches, and you also mentioned advisors, what's the difference between a success coach and an advisor?

EURE: And they do have some overlapping functions. I would say the one of the main differences is that success coaches actually reach out to students proactively, whereas, typically, the students will go to advisors to help them pick out their classes, and that's what they kind of know. But we are gonna be working together very closely. We have always worked together, but I think the new approach gives, and they will have their own advisors as well as success coaches. And so, we'll work strategies out together and, and I might, for example, reach out to an engineering student but would find out they had not seen advising. And I would say, "You know you need to make sure you talk to an advisor because you're taking all these classes that you picked that might not be the correct classes."

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK, all right. So, I like the fact that you overlap, actually, with advisors. When a student, and you and I have talked about different needs and when a student comes to you, you actually are able to point them the right direction, and we'll get to money because I know that's one area that's students, you know, usually want to get some information on. But walk us through the process of what you do as a success coach when a student comes to you.

EURE: OK. Well, first, whether they come to me on their own or I reach out to them, my first thing is to get to know the student a little bit and let them know that my job is to help you be successful in whatever path you're choosing. But for me to help you, we need to talk and see what you really want to do. And so, the students begin to tell me, and they tell me, for example, "I wanna be an engineering major." And they may say, "But I really don't like math." And that puts a red flag in my mind because I know engineering is based on that. But they have been all their life thinking, "I want to be an engineer" because they might have been making all As and Bs in school, but they really didn't like math, even though they might have passed it. They may have made As and Bs, but they hate math. So, I kind of would refer them to Career Services, and they can do exploration and let them see different majors.

I can give me examples of students like that. I had a student that made all As, and he was an engineering major, but he took a psychology or sociology class, and he came back to me and said, "I'm gonna change my major. I said, "But you made all As." He said, "But I don't like engineering like I like psychology. I've never had a class in" whatever it was, sociology or psychology. And his mother was a medical doctor, so his family had taught him all his life, "You're really smart. You gonna be an engineer or a doctor." He said, "But that was their choice. It was not mine." So, we help students guide them to what is it that you really want to do, and you can be successful in any career path. So, that was a long answer.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: No, no, that was great because, on your website, that actually says you'll have ways of finding the student's strengths, and you know kind of helping them with that. And I think that's kind of one example you just gave is you talking to them, you know, to figure out what are strengths you might not know, and you're able to kind of point them in the, in the right direction.

So, with students that, you mentioned two ways that students are actually assigned to you, and then there are those that will just come to you, right? If a student comes to you, how do you determine whether you are the one to help them, or if it's an advisor they should go to?

EURE: It depends on what they want. First, I will look on our master list to see if they have a coach and have they talked to them and connect to that person right then. I'll give them a little information, but my goal is always to put you with the right resource. So, sometimes, students just come because other students tell them, "You need to go talk to him. He can help you." But I, I kind of play it by ear. "What do you need?" And, and then I send it because Wake Tech has so many, so many resources.

The ILC is one of the top places that I refer people to because they'll, they'll identify – and really, right now, we have a great intake form. So, when the students check these boxes, and they say they have problems with time management, they need to improve their study skills, but they wanna make all As. So, I'm kind of walking them through. "How do you think you're gonna make all As?" "Well, I'm gonna go to class." "But are you gonna check email? Blackboard? Teams? Are you gonna ask your professor questions? Are you gonna go to the office hours? And have you heard of the ILC?" And I'm always amazed that most of them have heard of it, but they have never been.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: What are we talking about? ILC, what is ILC?

EURE: ILC stands for Individualized Learning Center.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH:  Sure.

EURE: And they can help any student in any class, and they really focus a lot on writing and math and science, but they can help in all classes.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: I'm actually interviewing someone from the ILC in a couple of weeks here. So, we'll get more information on that. But back to the success coaches. How may, I'm not, I'm not ending the show yet by asking you this questions, but it is, it's, I was just gonna ask you, how do students find you? And I'm not also trying to direct traffic over to you because I know students are assigned to you and you guys have a lot of students. But for the student, like, just point, you know, how do they do that? Is it through the website?

EURE: I have had people come from the website, but we get what we call caseloads. And so, right now, we have seven coaches, but we will have 12, and the goal is to, and we really only used to have four. At one point, we only had two. So, you could imagine with the increased manpower how much more effective we will be. But I believe that is folded into retention, that is, we start with students early. So, our goal is to make sure every student that comes to Wake Tech as a new student gets a success coach.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK.

EURE: And, and we had them being assigned in various ways, but changing it into major makes it, really, I think, more seamless for the student, because you're gonna have your faculty that's gonna teach and

your discipline area, and you're gonna have the advisors, and you're gonna have the success coach, and we all kind of will work with them, hopefully, even before classes start, and that would be something new for us. But for advisors, they've always done that.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK. Yeah, I'm gonna jump back a little bit because that's where we started the show. I looked in here, and I said success coaches, never had that, you know. I think it's something that is fairly new. Do you have any idea when it started and, as you also mentioned, it's not just Wake Tech, most colleges have it. So, when do you think people realized that there was a need and how did that whole thing start? I know I'm putting you back to getting some history here, but yeah.

EURE: I'm not really sure, but I'm sure it's less than 20 years, probably 10 [indecipherable]. But the entire community college system has success coaches now, and they have a conference coming up in Winston-Salem for coaching. And I, I believe that what has happened is, as technology has increased, as students have been more able to do things on their own, that a lot has moved from the exact formal counseling mode into a collaborative coaching mode because, if the student knows what they want, you don't have to do everything. You just need to kinda guide them to the resource.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right, right. Is there any type of training or seminars that you all have to go through? Like you said, when you saw the position and you applied, were there specific skills that they were looking for?

EURE: They were looking for, at that time and they still are, people that understood higher education processes in terms of offices, so Registration, Financial Aid, Career Services. And, in fact, when we first started, we were really partnering hard with Career Services, and there is a software called Career Coach and so that was one of our goals, one of our functions in terms of measurements that every student, that you had get them to go through the Career Coach and guide them toward Career Services. And so, that was a function, and financial literacy was a function. So now, in the new model, I think that a lot of different areas have coaches because there are, in fact, career coaches at Wake Tech and then there are success coaches.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK.

EURE: And then we have the financial person who does coaching, and I think you've interviewed her, Tonya, LaTonya Parsons. So, we work closely with her, and, really, the success coach is, what I love about it is you get to work with every area of the college. And that, when we first came, was the main thing, let us acquaint you with every area and meet with them. And so, I would take a half a day at a time. We met with Pathways Male Mentoring. We met with the Office of Volunteerism and Leadership, Financial Aid, Academic Advising. We just met with everybody so that, when we, when we started working with students, we had a really good idea of what the resources were.

They also wanted to us to bring our community connections with us, so there were and, and Wake Tech has great partnerships, and if the student is saying, "I really want to volunteer," I know we have the Office of Volunteerism and Leadership. But I'm also connected in ways that I can just suggest something to them.

I know that you got me answered these questions of a very long way, but …

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: No.

EURE: Just shut me up and let's …

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: No, no, that's great information that is needed for the students. I've always said you are in a very unique role, you know. I kind of put success coaches, advisors as front face for students, you know, the first point of, you know, resource. What do you think it takes if I, if I say give me three qualities of what it takes to be a successful success coach. What would be the top three?

EURE: The first one is you really have to care about students because a lot of people say that they like people and they like working with people – until they have to work with people.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: There you go.

EURE: Right. They might work with people they like, right? You got to work with all kinds of people.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: There you go, right.

EURE: So, I think that's the Number 1 thing, and that you are open enough to serve everybody. And the second thing is you have to really a patient and listen. Listen to the student; don't just tell them an answer. First, dig a little deeper. What are you really asking? You're saying that you wanna become independently wealthy. Let's find out why do you wanna do that. Oh, because you have food insecurity and you have all kinds of financial problems? But did you know we have an office of, what is the, Student Money Management? And did you know that, and I when I say things like Insta, Instacart, do you know what that is? They do, and I say you can shop for groceries at Wake Tech, and, and it won't be delivered to your house, but you can pick it up from various locations on campus though The Nest, which is made by faculty and staff volunteers.

Then, we talk about the Wake Tech scholarships, and they don't really know about them, and the Wake Tech Foundation does an excellent job. All they have to do is write a one-page essay, and the ILC the English Department, all kinds of people will check behind them, and I have volunteered to help grade these papers. They're, they're blind copies. I mean, I don't know who the person is, and each person might get three, four, five people looking at it, and we rank them. So, we're telling the students, "You need to go to a scholarship essay workshop," and they're like, OK, and then they go. And I think it's like one in 15 students that applied receive these scholarships, and the average award is $1,200. So, when you start giving them numbers that make sense to them, they start moving forward.

And we also have emergency funds. Right now, we have COVID emergency funds. So, just knowing the resources and pushing them out, that's, that's, that's what we do.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: All right.

EURE: Do you ask me three?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Three.

EURE: OK.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: And it's OK if you have two.

EURE: OK. I think in my, you know, my two I put some, some other things in there. So, that's good.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: All right, what are some of the challenges that you have or, and again, you don't have to be very, I just want students to know what they can bring to you and not so much what they cannot bring to you because, either way, I want students to be comfortable knowing that you care, and you pointed me in the right direction. But what would you say some of that challenges with issues that students bring to you?

EURE: I think the first one is that they are a little timid with communicating with the professors, and they may have lots of questions that they're asking me, and I'm saying, "Did you talk to your professors?" "No, I didn't." You missed the class because you had a doctor's appointment, and you didn't let the professor know and ask them can you make up the work? "No, I just feel like they weren't going to do that." Well, you never know till you ask. If they say no, that's OK, but do ask. Ask if there's extra-credit opportunities, and just ask questions period, and, and that's what we all are here for – to answer those questions or help me find the answer.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Right, right. So, I actually, since you mentioned faculty, I was gonna ask you a question about faculty. But you also have students that are on the verge of getting kicked out of school come to you.

EURE: Oh yeah. And, and right now, it's getting ready to be midterm, and, and they're gonna start coming what, because we've been emailing, and I know students get frustrated with emails. But we email them, we call them, we send them messages on Teams, and in some cases, we actually go visit classes virtually and in person. But when they, what I like about it is, even though you didn't respond then, that you know I'm here, and I've even had students from past semesters that will contact me, but I had never talked to them during past semesters. So, you so you never know. It's an African proverb that you probably know: Only when the student is ready, then appears the teacher – or the resource. You've always been there and willing to help them, but they couldn't see you because they weren't looking. They weren't. OK?

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Yeah. I liked that you used that African proverb. There's another one that says We only pray when we need to God.

EURE: Oh yeah.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: So, there's another one, too. All right. No, that's, that's great. So, it looks like you guys, and I mean success coaches, are always kind of frontline when they come in and they're all happy and it's good. And also at the end, when they actually are really troubled, they do come to you. But you did also mention that they will even come to you with faculty issues and concerns.

EURE: Right.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: How close are the success coaches with faculty, if any. Do you all kind of communicate?

EURE: Yes, we do. OK, I'm very familiar with a lot of faculty.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: But that's good.

EURE: And putting it in the new format of the care teams, you will have to be familiar with the faculty in that particular discipline area. So, I think this is gonna be a good model. So yes, you need to be very comfortable with faculty, and faculty need to be comfortable with us and asking us questions. And then we, they refer students all the time.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK. I see that now too. So, what's the, what's the typical scenario of a student coming to you with an issue with a professor and how you will reach out to the professor? And I'm sure this has been handled so students know that there's actually a solution to that process.

EURE: Well, the first thing I wanna know, why do you have a problem with the professor? And is it because you are not doing something you're supposed to do? And if you're not doing what you're supposed to do, have a conversation with the professor and explain to them why, especially if you have good reasons. And I just think there's a fear factor, and it could just be the idea of you being in college, especially students, even high school students, they, they're not used to the way our college might run because, in high school, you're gonna get it announcements on the intercom, and everybody knows you cause you have the same basic people in your school for four years, from ninth to the 12th grade. But we don't. They're coming from all over, from different high schools and different processes, and Wake Tech is a community college, but it's very complex and you can get lost. So, so I do think that my biggest challenge, and what I think is the biggest challenge for the whole process, is getting connected to the students and making sure that we at least talk to them once, and if we could do that, I think that we would resolve a lot of these issues.

But when they come about faculty, sometimes if I know a faculty member well enough, I will kind of let them know a student is coming to see you. They have some issues. And if I don't know them, I always tell the students communicate, send them an email, call them, send them a message on Teams, and if it doesn't go as you think it should have went, please let me know. And then we can kinda just brainstorm a little bit more, and maybe, sometimes, and then you, that's when I would send them to advisor, and maybe you need to drop that class and take it again next semester.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK. That's great. I think I've, I've covered all the questions that I wanted to ask you about success coaches. Thanks for the information. What is one advice you will have for students?

EURE: Use your resources. Make sure you get connected, and especially in the beginning, don't just, and I know it's overwhelming, but and also, if I could say it, before you actually take the first day of class, begin to reach out. If you can go on the website, and I know orientation is overwhelming and a lot of things are changing, my main thing is just understand that Wake Tech has a lot of resources, and all you have to do is reach out. And if you ask anybody, they will likely be able to refer you to a success coach, and that's our job is to navigate you to all the systems.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: OK. All right. And again, I'm not trying to direct traffic to you since I know you are assigned students, but when can students find you?

EURE: We have a web page on, within Wake Tech, it's successcoach.waketech.edu, and if they look on that, they'll see all of the coaches. It has a make appointment form. It has a referral form, and students can refer themselves just by clicking that button.

O'RIORDAN-ADJAH: Well, great information. Once again, it has been my great pleasure to have Mr. Michael here today to take, talk about success coaches, numerous resources. I'm trying to think of who else is left. Next week, I'll be interviewing an advisor. But please, please, please utilize these resources. If you have any questions, reach out to me.

Oh, and by the way, if you do subscribe, you could vote on who's hat you think is the best. I like Michaels, if you want mine too, just vote, and I will take it from there. But Michael, thanks again.

EURE: Thank you.