



Zayla Pope
Grayson College
Student of the Year
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“Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it.” Maya Angelou, an iconic American poet, who has been my role model since I was young. I love this quote because it’s saying if you don’t like yourself, then change yourself. I was told that I would not receive anything in life, and I have proven them wrong. I came to college with a fresh pair of eyes, and I gave college my everything.



A journey in a new environment can be terrifying and it takes time to get used to. Just like a most incoming freshman, I was nervous, confused, and not fully prepared. During my first year, I was in a TRiO program called Student Support Services (SSS). This program helps students with disabilities, first-generation, and/or students that are low-income. Other than SSS, the only four places I would go to were class, the library, and the food court. After my first year, everything just flipped.

I had been in SSS for one whole semester. They got me to participate and start to come out of my shell. I was invited to join their leadership club, and apply for an officer position. I decided to campaign for the only position which was still open: President. I was so surprised when I was actually elected as SSS Leadership Club President. Being President of Student Support Services was the first officer position I had ever received, and was the first of many on my journey. During my time as President, we made shirts and sold them to members of the program to fundraise. We sold t-shirts, so we could raise extra money to fund a trip to an out of state leadership conference.

From 2018-2020, I applied to become a Student Ambassador. Student Ambassadors at Grayson College are given a chance to give tours around campus and show the future incoming Vikings how fantastic Grayson is. I have met so many people who are students at Grayson through being an ambassador. My favorite part of being an ambassador is being a friendly and inviting face for incoming Vikings, and being able to encourage them to see Grayson as they can be their home away from home .

In Spring 2019, I received an email about the Student Government Association (SGA) making a comeback. In the first meeting, there were so many clubs and organization representatives who came. Since it was the first-ever meeting of Student Government at Grayson, it was led by the advisor OL Kelly. He defined the meaning of SGA and what the duties of SGA council members are. At first, I thought SGA was not going to be as exciting as Mr. Kelly pointed out. But by the end of the meeting, I decided to run for office. I was unsure which position but I knew I wanted to be a part of this.

I remember spending a whole week trying to figure out which position I wanted to run for. The nervousness I felt got me thinking, “what would I do as President?” and “what goals would I try to achieve if I win the election?”. I asked my advisors at Student Support Services, close friends, my family, and even some strangers to see if they thought I was fit to be a President of the student body. I was so terrified that I even asked OL Kelly for his opinion since he was the advisor of the club, and this was before he even knew me that well. He told me no one had applied for the position at the moment. After the deadline to turn in the application, the other candidates and I received an email to figure out when we could meet. We all voted for a four o’clock meeting to find out who would be elected to the executive positions. All the runners were seated in a conference room waiting for Mr. OL Kelly to walk in to announce everyone's

position. The President position went to me, a girl from Sherman who was only involved in two organizations. I was so excited about getting the role of President and getting the chance to get to know everyone on the board. This was just the beginning of a new era of my journey of involvement.

While being President of the Student Government Association, a Student Ambassador and being an active member of Student Support Services, I wanted to be more involved in the Vikings' community. I decided to join a club, which was in the process of becoming an official active club at Grayson College: Black Print. I started hanging out with members from Black Print, then I went to the meetings to see what it was fully about. Black Print is a club on campus to bring individuals together to help improve the lives of African Americans and give them opportunities to let their voices be heard, as well as to bring change and diversity to Grayson College. In the first year of Black Print, I was a member and helped plan events for the club. Then, starting the 2019-2020 year, I became Vice President of Black Print. My duties were to design a shirt for the club, and to help with outreach to students and the community for events which were hosted by us. I learned to balance duties and responsibilities within all my organizations as well as learning to leave myself plenty of time for school.

In Spring 2019, Student Government Association, we region conference preparing for our first Texas Junior College Student Government Association (TJCSGA) in Addison, Texas. OL Kelly described the events taking place last year and in previous years that he had attended. From what he pointed out, it sounds fantastic and like it could be a great learning experience for everyone. We did a poem, video, the event of the year, and song as the submission for Grayson College. During the week, we had a session and workshops to attend to learn new things. OL Kelly gave us a talk about how we as individuals are like \$2 bill. On Saturday night, there was an opportunity to meet with people from other colleges and even time to put on togas. There were a couple of people who wore theirs but Grayson College SGA designed theirs. On award night, Grayson College was just happy to be there and at least submit something in. So, when we heard we won a plaque or certificate, we were shocked. During the week, I became friends with people from other colleges. I told myself that I would like to come back to experience another conference next year.



I did exactly like I said and in 2019-2020, I decided to come back to Student Government to run again as President again. I loved being on the Executive Board and trying to make changes that reflected the vision of the student body. Since last term was a short term, I was given the chance to apply for another term and I took it. For this academic year, I wanted to actually spend a whole year making changes and putting Grayson College Student Government Association to be known on campus. I made it my goal to attend and sit in every club at Grayson to show Student Government is here to support. In the fall term, I led the initiative for each club to conduct an awareness day, week or month to participate. Student Government's awareness week campaign was Stop American Violence Everywhere (S.A.V.E). Durning, October 21st through 24th, we passed out purple ribbons for awareness to students and staff at Grayson. We had students and staff put encouraging words on windows in the shape of the

letters of SAVE. To end the week, we planted a tree on the survivors and non-survivors of violence;s behalf.



The Grayson College Student Government Association was able to attend the Region 2 conference at the Mountain View College. The theme was “Lights Camera Action” and the college did an amazing job hosting it. The most exciting thing was to see old faces from the state conference and meet new people. I was given the opportunity to learn about myself as a leader. One of the lessons I learned from this event is that no one person is a leader, it takes the whole team to lead. Regardless of what position you are, you are a leader and you contribute to the success of the entire team.

I feel that I have achieved so much throughout this year and part of that includes feeling more confident, more educated, able to take more risks, getting my parliamentary procedure down better than last year, and being open-minded to things around me. I received a scholarship for \$1000 from the Cynthia Arden Sanders Memorial Scholarship, which I wasn't expecting to receive. Then I served on the Grayson College student panel for Austin College TedX. While on the panel, my duties were to give a student's point of view but I wanted to go the extra mile. I was in contact with marketing at Grayson and worked with them to create a flyer for the event to get the word out there to more of the community. I also helped create a table with an activity reflection on the theme. The theme was “Shifting Perception” for the 2019 year. On December 14th, I helped out Phi Theta Kappa with their event which they do every year. They wrap gifts for people at Belk in Sherman, Texas for free. At the end of December, I participated in “One-Night In Cardboard Box” where students get to spend the night in a cardboard box on campus to raise awareness of the challenges faced by those who are homeless. The week before, I joined in with donating blankets, jackets and gloves for the homeless. On one cold night, I spend the night in a cardboard box and experience what homeless people who live outside have to deal with. In February, I was given an opportunity to give a speech on Grayson College's behalf at Martin Luther's King March and participate in the 8th annual Black History Program at Grayson College. In the program, our Black Print team and I planned the event from beginning to end. My main job was to make and present a video. I

~~to home a couple of times, going to school and~~
a new home. The CPS room was silent I eventually stopped becoming a linguist, but it the entire weekend other making friends out of fear also didn't work out. I

age 1)
; however, prizes will be awarded on a team to determine how to share/allocate the prize. ecting nonperishable items for the purposes though it is called "Construction," any itted. Some things to keep in mind: may be used. If using plastic containers, weight of cans from above. e permitted. ic beverages are permitted. junk food. Because the items used will be the focus should be on food with high unopened. Labels must remain intact and gged food items is permitted, but care ig of the structure that the items are not any way. should be used.

ase remember these guidelines:
a structure is 8ft long x 8ft wide x 8ft high. thin these dimensions. discouraged. Judges prefer pure food assign problems with nonperishable food elf-supporting. No boards, tubing, sheet n thick foam core, cardboard, plywood, r the purpose of leveling or balancing ring. le-sided tape may be used. ands, nylon string, wire, and tie-backs are es may be used. for leaving their site "broom-clean." le items may begin now. Teams will need to llected items as the build space will not be ams will need to register to participate in the yson.edu. Teams must be registered by structures in their assigned areas on Monday, res must be completed by Friday, November itted to build their structures during normal sday, November 19. The first-place team will e team will win \$100. Prizes will be awarded n the team. ire from GC clubs/organizations then those option of having the prize money deposited

TEDxAustinCollege welcomes Grayson Student Life

TEDxAustinCollege
an independently organized TED event



2019

By Storm Anderson, Viking Editor

TED talks first began in the mid '80s, but their popularity has exploded in recent years through the popularity of sites such as Youtube and Facebook. Originally standing for Technology Entertainment and Design, TED talks have since expanded to topics such as financial inequality, psychology, international relations, religion and seemingly any other topic one can imagine.

TEDx is a program that allows local communities (traditionally college campuses) to independently fund and organize their own talks. Only five colleges/universities offer TEDx events in Texas. Luckily, one of those schools is in our neighborhood.

TEDxAustinCollege has hosted TEDx events for the past several years. This year's event, titled *Shifting Perceptions*, features several Austin College alumni addressing homelessness, the interception of technology and healthcare, the 2008 financial crisis and more.

TEDxAustinCollege will be held on **Saturday, September 28 from 9:30am to 2:30pm** on the Austin College campus. Tickets (including lunch) are available on the Austin College website for \$30, but don't be discouraged if you can't afford the fee!

The Grayson Student Life office is **giving away tickets** for the event and providing transportation from the Grayson main campus to Austin College. Lunch will be provided to students who register! Tickets are limited and on a first-come-first-served basis.

Reserving a seat will cost a \$5 fee. This money will be refunded to you once you arrive on the Austin College campus.

EVENT SCHEDULE

What's happening today?

9:30 A.M. | HELLO + DISCOVERY DEPOT

Check in and grab your badge. Take an exploratory stroll. Let us know what you think.

10:30 A.M. | SESSION ONE

Is this seat taken? Find your perfect spot at the Main Stage or the Live Simulcast.

11:45 A.M. | FOOD FOR THOUGHT + DISCOVERY DEPOT

Join us in the first-floor Dining Hall for lunch and spend some time in conversation about Ideas Worth Spreading. The Discovery Depot is open for exploration of thoughts and ideas.

1:00 P.M. | SESSION TWO

Please return to your seat. The show will go on.

2:15 P.M. | DISCOVERY DEPOT

Take a few moments to speak to a presenter. Reflect on your time today. Engage in the conversation of discovery.



SPEAKERS ▶

called it "Dear Next Generation" and it was several community people giving advice to the next generation.

I'm a full time student at Grayson College, involved in four organizations, but I still do more things. I'm also a work-study in the Financial Aid Office, and I work part-time as a caregiver at Quality HomeHealth Care. I've had 2 clients there. I help my mom around the house to do house duties like cooking and bathing. As the oldest child, it's my main focus to take care of my family. My family includes my mom and little sister. With my jobs, I am able to take part in paying bills and taking my family anywhere they need to go.



Now that I'm wrapping up my journey at Grayson College and preparing to graduate this May, I have seen everything with a different set of eyes. In the years at Grayson, I have learned how to properly juggle and balance life, college, work, and involvement at college. In other words, I have learned to use time management and being extremely organized. SGA has shown me to speak better properly in meetings and with other people. I even improved in parliamentary procedures which I am known for struggling with in my first year. Now, I am getting the hang of parliamentary procedures and using it more. I started this year with a cheat sheet and now I'm not even looking at my sheet while conducting meetings. Practice makes perfect and I am getting there.



In this academic year, I was the President of Grayson College Student Association, Vice President of Black Print, Vice President of Student Support Services leadership, and Grayson Student Ambassador. I stayed in these clubs not for the resume, but to be more involved in activities at Grayson and I love getting to know more people. I know that all of these experiences have helped shape who I am and will help me in my pursuit of higher education. I am so excited to transfer this fall to Texas A&M Commerce, where I am sure my level of involvement will continue. When I transfer I have decided to join their Student Government there, but I think I will start as a Senator... then I will aim for President!

