



We asked Travis ('11, Telecommunications Systems Management) and Kelly Taylor ('11, Exercise Science) to tell us more about their experiences as a First-Generation Racer. The Taylors recently established the Travis and Kelly Taylor First-Generation Student Scholarship.

Kelly Taylor:

What or who motivated you to persist through college to earn your degree?

- My parents were definitely my primary motivation to not only persist but also excel through college and onward into my graduate studies and professional career. Since I was young, they instilled the values of education and intellect, therefore, promoting a natural, built-in motivation that I carried with me while at Murray State. Along with valuing academic performance and knowledge obtainment, my internal motivation to serve and be an impactful campus leader, supplemented my motivation to remain and thrive as a Racer. The encouragement and relationships I gained from other students, faculty, and staff not only afforded me the opportunity to flourish on campus, but continued to persist beyond graduation through lifelong friendships, dedicated mentorships, and professional connections that undoubtedly solidified the foundation of my career and adult life.

What advice would you give other first-generation students?

- Explore! Ask questions! Try new things! Get involved! The classroom is a very important aspect of college but it should not be the entire experience. I encourage students to explore the various student organizations on campus – this is where you find “your people.” I was personally involved in SGA, Greek Life, and my pre-professional club but I assure you that there is an organization for every student at Murray State. Ask questions to learn more about these organizations and then jump in and try something. Once you have found the right one(s) for you, lean into being an active member and leader of that organization. Additionally, I highly recommend students to be proactive and utilize the various resources on campus to be successful. Ask questions and build relationships with your academic advisor and professors. Check out services and opportunities offered through the library and Career Services. Being a first-generation college student may mean that we do not have all of the answers when we first step onto campus, but we certainly have the power to obtain those answers once we get there.



What is one of your favorite quotes?

- “I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something that I can do.” – Edward Everett Hale, American Author

Travis Taylor:

What or who motivated you to persist through college to earn your degree?

- My parents knew I was destined for college, and they encouraged me to find my niche and go to school. When mom and dad dropped me off at Hester College in the fall of 2007, I began a four-year journey to make them proud. It was the confidence my parents had in me that got me to Murray State University, but it was the organizations I joined that gave me the drive to stay and succeed. Being elected Freshman Senator and joining Sigma Phi Epsilon in the Fall of my Freshman year were dramatic inflection points for my college career. The fellow students, faculty, and staff that I encountered as a result of being involved in student organizations gave me the inspiration I needed to earn more than a degree at Murray State- I found lifelong friends, and sharpened the skills I needed to launch my career.

What advice would you give other first-generation students?

- Get involved, ask questions, and jump in! Student organizations (from SGA to Greek Life, and everything in between) offer you the opportunity to learn critical thinking and leadership skills that cannot be honed in the classroom. Join an organization, contribute to the goals of the group, and do your best to become a leader. If you aren't sure what to join, ask fellow students and faculty/staff members for direction. You'll know when you've found the right organization to serve- when you find it, jump in head-first.

What is one of your favorite quotes?

- Winston Churchill once said, “Continuous effort, not strength or intelligence, is the key to unlocking our potential.” Whether you're the first in your family to go to college, or a fourth generation Racer- it is your continuous effort that will pave the way to graduation and success in life.