Department Spotlight: Sterling Tobiasson

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"...the most important thing I learned in the Professional School Counseling program was that people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." - Sterling Tobiasson

Sterling Tobiasson is a recent graduate of the Professional School Counseling Program at Utah State. He is a self-proclaimed “late bloomer,” pursuing his Master’s of Education after following many career paths including teacher, pilot, EMT, excavator, and youth mentor. While living abroad, Sterling found a passion for working with teenagers. He enrolled in the Professional School Counseling Program to help support his family and his goal of working in international student counseling.

Why did you decide to pursue a degree in school counseling?

I lived in Indonesia, where I tutored students preparing to take the ACT and SAT exams. I found that one-on-one tutoring was an excellent fit for me. When I moved back to America, I started looking for degrees that would help me to provide for my family. Educational psychology was exactly what I was looking for. USU caught my attention right away for being reputable and highly ranked. Relocating to Logan was not ideal due to the jobs my wife and I already had. Fortunately, USU offered distance learning through broadcast classes. I could not believe my luck; the degree I wanted was available and the timing was perfect.

What advice do you have for other students in the Professional School Counseling Program?

The advice I have for those starting the Professional School Counseling Program is to know yourself well. Know if you work well with kids and what age ranges you prefer. Know how to work as a team member, a leader, and in a stressful situation. I worked with teenagers eight years prior to applying to the program, so I knew coming in that I was well suited for this job. If you are still questioning the fit, consider job shadowing several schools to solidify your decision. Once you apply, be all in!

Who influenced you most during your time at USU?

Justin Barker influenced me the most during my time at USU. His class was easily the most rigorous class I have ever taken, yet I learned and appreciated it more than any other class. I felt like he knew our capabilities and wanted to help us see our own potential through hard work. I was able to gain confidence as I passed his quizzes and exams. I knew I was breaking mental barriers thanks to his teaching.

What is the most important thing you learned in the Professional School Counseling Program?

As cliché as it may seem, the most important thing I learned in the Professional School Counseling Program was that people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. There is so much information to be taken in during this degree, but at the end of the day, the information cannot be used until you make connections with students and teachers alike.