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## Be the Best You Can Be- and Then Some

**By Vu Tran**  
UCF Forum columnist  
Wednesday, September 3, 2014

The first few weeks of the school year can be overwhelming for anyone, especially at a university of nearly 60,000 students.

As a graduate student, I see an uncertain, frightened look in the faces of many new students wondering what to do and how to succeed. So I want to share the advice that has helped me and can apply to any new student.

“Bloom where you are planted,” as Beth Barnes, UCF’s vice president emerita and special assistant to the president, says to students.

No matter what class you are enrolled in, the job you work at, or your position within an organization, do the best that you can because others will notice. Build up your credibility and inspire others along the way.

When I first set foot at UCF as a freshman, I was overcome by trepidation and anticipation. I cannot describe how eager and ecstatic I was to begin this new chapter in my life. I knew what I wanted to accomplish (high grades, involvement in campus activities, research with a professor, and the list goes on), but I did not know how to pursue these goals.

In high school I was a good student, but not a great student. I often faded into the background because I was shy, reticent, and lacked confidence in my abilities. I yearned for change and even though I did not know it at the time, UCF would be where I would start to leave a mark.

True to UCF's slogan of "Stands for Opportunity," every day for the past four years at the university has been an opportunity for me, and it is up to each individual to take advantage of their opportunities. I cherish every day at UCF as a privilege because I was and still am thankful to be part of a school where the faculty members and staff care about their students' success.

It is normal to be worried and stressed about the future, but that should not hold you back from harnessing your full potential. If anything, you should take on the challenge and do everything to the best of your abilities. I see many new faces this year and I expect that one of these students will become the next Student Government Association president, the next Homecoming king or queen, or part of the next President's Leadership Council.

Have confidence in your abilities and who you are as a person. This is a lot easier said than done, as I still struggle with this insecurity myself. As cliché as it may sound, know your strengths and weaknesses. Exploit your strengths and improve on your weaknesses. For instance, my strength is that I am very enthusiastic and overly excited about every little thing because everything is just, well, so exciting! I exploit this strength when I try to motivate students about volunteering, or lighten everyone's mood at team-building retreats.

Always pursue what you are most passionate about, whether it is cooking for the homeless every Sunday with Volunteer UCF, or spending hours in a lab with your fellow graduate students. Do what YOU want to do.

Find reassurance that everything will turn out alright if you put the time and effort into your goals and aspirations. I know that there are others like me who are just as stressed about the future, but I am thrilled to embark on this new journey and accomplish wonders along the way, as you should be, too.

It is important that you learn from every experience and opportunity, and remember: Always be the best that you can be..."and then some," as Dr. Barnes would say.

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