[MUSIC] You are listening to Tell Me your Story where we connect to HLS staff on a personal level. [MUSIC].

Hello everyone. This is Edgar Kley Filho from the HR department at HLS. My pronouns are he him, his. Today we're talking with Megan Markov from the registrar's office, who will tell us about her life, how long she's in this HLS position and the work she does and something else that come up in our conversation here that might be right fun. Thank you very much for joining us, Megan.

I'm happy to be here. I think this is a great project.

Great. So, tell us your story who you are and how did you get here starting with?

My name is Megan. I'm the Associate Registrar and I always have to think about this for technology and enrollment services. I think that's my correct title. I've been here for I just passed my 15th anniversary a few weeks ago. You've got me beat by a couple of years, Edgar. I've been in the registrar's office the whole time. I came here from San Francisco, I was at UC Hastings prior to this and my husband and I want my fiance at the time decided to move back East. We want it to move back East and so I started looking for jobs out here and interviewed for the registrar position of all things in way over my head. I was like too green, too young for a place like this at a smaller state school. Totally. Here, no, I was too young for that at the time and just too novice, especially for the things that were going on. But I was fortunate that Marie Bowen remembered me. Marie Bowen, who was the dean of HR at the time. They were creating a new position for the registrar's office. They needed somebody with expertise in the student information system they were using at the time. I was a power user, I'd bet many years of experience in it and I was like a user representative for the whole thing. [OVERLAPPING] From the two prior schools I'd worked at. Marie remembered me and suggested me for the job and so I started here as a business analyst in the registrar's office. As business analyst and assistant to the registrar, I think was my title at the time. I did that for two years and then I quit. [LAUGHTER]

Why did you quit? [OVERLAPPING]

Because then I had here we go. In the first two years, less than two years I worked here. I bought a house, I got married, and had a baby.

Wow, that's awesome.

Then I got to the end of my maternity leave and I remember my husband was walking down the stairs getting ready to go somewhere and I was just sitting there holding my son. I can't leave him. Probably one of the worst financial decisions we ever made. I quit and I said I'm going to go I'm going to stay home and be a stay-at-home mom and that's going to be my jam for now.

All in love with your kid.

Totally in love with him.

That's amazing.

I didn't want to leave him. It's going to have some side hustles, but I just wanted to be at home with him. But the registrar at the time got engaged and her fiance lived in New Jersey. The writing was on the wall that she was going. She was going to leave and so I was asked to stay.

The office contacted you and ask you to come back?

They asked me to stay. They asked me to and they said, at least until we can hire a replacement or whatever. Can you stay and what will that look like? They let me work half-time.

That's wonderful.

I worked from home.

You could manage both worlds?

I could manage both and I had help, but I was able to stay at home and work and it was great. I did that for about a year I think. This is where it gets blurry in the timeline. They met a new registrar and they posted my position. They changed the title and that's when they hired Lisa Burns. Well, first we got the new registrar.

Wow.

Then they hired Lisa and Lisa took my job. She got hired into that job. This was an assistant registrar for something I forget. Then, but they were at the time we were going through a huge project to get a new student information system. They needed like the whole office was flat out together. I stayed on his backfill to keep things. The home fires burning a little bit and I gradually came I started coming in like one day a week back to campus and it was two days a week back to campus and then the registrar left. That registrar left, at least that became the registrar and she asked me to come back full time so I came back full-time in fall of '11.

How can you say no to Lisa Burns?

You cannot say no to Lisa Burn. She's great. She's wonderful to work for, she's fantastic. By that time I'd had a second baby but the whole work-life balance thing I was figuring out and it was a good time to come back.

That's interesting they're saying that because I think that also is an aspect of an employee. Mothers for example. You had your first baby is a completely new experience that you want really to enjoy and have that feeling and then the combination of both is not easy but you were able to have a second child and still be able to combine with work? [OVERLAPPING]

Yeah. I got the idea of daycare. I got used to it and I enjoyed being back. I enjoyed my I've never really left, but I enjoyed being here. It was a lot of interesting challenges going on. With Lisa at the helm. It was a great staff. I really get good environment to be in and there it was I like coming to work. We came together.

How many folks working together at that time?

Let's see. When I first started, we had 10, then we went down to nine.

Now.

Now we're back up to 10 although we're short-staffed.

Well, one thing that I know by the time when I used to be in that position you work for DOS during the exam period. That's what I remember most Megan because I was always really early and during this period because we never see each other in general. That's what happened most departments, everyone has their own tower in that way. You see in events, social events that the school provides throughout the year. But in a regular basis, every day, we don't see each other as much. But during the exam period for all this semester that you have, there comes Meghan walk in the hallway putting stuff on their own at each door, making sure that nobody is making noise and everything. That was just my impression when I saw you passing by. That goes Meghan on exams. [LAUGHTER] Exams are here. Tell us about the exam. How much is involved there and how many people from registrars, if you can have an idea of the scope of the work that you do there?

Goodness example are huge. They are the I mean, I do a lot of different things in the registrar's office but exams are a beast of all the things I do. They are an absolute beast. We administer over 6,000 individual exams a year so it's a lot. When we were back when we were on campus, that's when you would see me running around. I get all my steps in like in Vensim (a lot of steps) during the exam period, running around the different classrooms and shifting proctors around and troubleshooting proctors, I guess exams then Pre-COVID, there were a lot of logistics. I mean, there are always a lot of logistics with exams, but the whole idea of the classrooms and the hiring of proctors in the supervising or proctors in the scheduling everybody in the scheduling space. That part was enormous and have been very happy to not deal with it for the last two years. [LAUGHTER]

Always going to be back.

We'll see. But exams basically take there's a part of exam is going on almost all year because we start in the spring prior to registration when students are registering for the upcoming year, we have to have all the information about what type of which classes will have exams, what type of exams there'll be, and create the exam schedule. There's a bit of secret sauce that goes into that for the considerations of the one L's and certain faculty and etc.

What different exams are, I have three or four? [OVERLAPPING]

The ones that are on campus when we have exams on campus are usually three hours and we usually do 7-8 exams a day.

Wow.

Usually, four in the morning, three in the afternoon. Sometimes, it's four and four, sometimes we can get it down to three and three.

So those are in class exams?

Those are in-class exams. In the fall, the exam period is much more condensed than it is in the spring. Stiff to cram a lot of exams into a short period of time. On top of those, we are also running one-day take-homes. Which are exams that are scheduled for a particular day.

Okay. So, how does is work, the take home exam? Explain that for people who have no clue what is it, take home exams. How does it work?

We have a few different take-home exams. We have ones that are scheduled for particular day, ones that are available throughout the whole exam period that students can self-schedule their time. But it's a consecutive period of hours that they have to choose to do the exam. We have last class take-homes where students can spend the whole exam period writing them. What it means for an exam to be a take-home is that students download an exam file from an exam4.com, which is the vendor that we work with to administer exams and then they write the exam themselves at home in the library, at Starbucks, wherever they want to be and then they upload it through our exam software. They don't have to be on campus. They could be anywhere in the world and they're just working independently.

But they have a specific time and deadlines to start and end?

Exactly.

Okay. You have eight hours exam?

So those are usually that's the one day take-homes are usually eight hours and then any day take-homes, the ones where they self scheduler also usually eight hours. They pick their eight-hour window. Some people do it at one o'clock in the morning. Some people stick with business hours. It's all over the place.

Some prefer just to stay on campus. Some prefer to be whatever they want to be?

[OVERLAPPING] Some students will travel.

I know one student this fall will be taking exams from Hong Kong, for instance, and just having to do all that math on the time difference and taking exams in the middle of the night.

When is the scheduled to here they are going to adjust their time zone wherever they are to make sure that everything is completed the time that's suggested, right?

Yes.

This is all beautiful explain in a way [LAUGHTER] that goes smoothly that has no problems. Let's talk then when you have the accommodations. [OVERLAPPING] You're working in a sense very close with facilities office for arrangements and everything else to makes sure that the campuses are prepared, you work with other departments rather than accessibility whoever?

Right. We work with facilities, with events, with accessibility because we do a lot of arrangement of classroom space and when they have things they need to organize figuring out where they can go and that won't disturb exams and space we don't need. Facilities, events, accessibility services, and the Dean of Students Office.

ITS.

ITS.

That's a big chunk.

That's a huge chunk of it and faculty support services also.

That's right because you have to deal with all the needs from the faculty well and how it's going to be prepared. With all these engagement with all the different departments, then you have a close contact with accessibility that's just going to via what the request is and the needs that students have is going to justify which students are going to work from. Then the three hours become what, three and a half?

Most typically, would be time and a half. Be four and a half hours for three-hour exam, 12 hours for an eight-hour. [OVERLAPPING]

[OVERLAPPING] For the eight hours exam extended because of the time that they need for breaks and to rest a little bit or whatever various needs they have?

[OVERLAPPING] For whenever various needs they have to use different software to write their exam, whether you speech recognition or things like that. There's numerous reasons why students would have time accommodations. Time and a half is commons. Some students get breaks for their exams, get to take stopcock breaks. It's all over the place. Some people get a combination of those things. [OVERLAPPING]

You have to consider. I'm saying that because I have parts of fading away and watch it away. We also have the emergency situations. When the day of the exam without any accommodation or anything, something happens this student needs to be accommodated because, the flu because of something happening in their families. Whatever reason was that you come up and immediately you have to make that change as well, right?

Right. We always have last minute. The exam period is basically putting out a series of fires. [LAUGHTER] Essentially, that's what it is. [OVERLAPPING] Putting out a series of fires. There will be students will have emergencies. Obviously, COVID has played into it for the past couple of years where students are testing positive and then not feeling well and then have to delay exams for that reason. Sometimes, students have the fire alarm starts going off in their building when they're in the middle of an exam or heck that happened here on campus once [LAUGHTER] during an in-class exam, is not fun. It's better than when I was at UC Hastings, we were having rolling brownouts during exams. [OVERLAPPING] [LAUGHTER]

[OVERLAPPING] That should be Hasting?

Yeah. UC Hastings. [OVERLAPPING] That's when PG&E was doing rolling brownouts in California, one time with the proctor said flashlights. [LAUGHTER]

Another thing, proctors. I believe that there are quite a few people that don't even know what the proctors do. Can you go over not the full process, but how they are hired? Usually, who they are in general? [OVERLAPPING]

I basically inherited the vast majority of our proctor pool. They've been here proctoring exams since before I started.

Really?

Yeah. Irene Bauer, who is our head proctor she and her husband Richard were running exams here before I started. [OVERLAPPING] Richard has since passed, but Irene still comes every year and helps us out when we have on-campus exams. They're fantastic bunch. A lot of retired teachers, lot of them proctor than mass bar or proctor some of the other professional exams in the area. It's a lot of word of mouth.

They come into the class and watch these students have their exams following a series of procedures?

Yeah they have very specific process. [OVERLAPPING] We have all the materials that they read a script that's everybody finesses it a little there a certain way, but they check in all the students to make sure that you are who you say you are, you show me your ID, you are allowed to be here, take this exam. They collect all the materials. They distribute materials, collect materials, they monitor the room. They proctor students with accommodations take their exams in different settings. They proctor those exams as well and keep track of time for people who have breaks and extended time, etc.

So you have quite a few meters prior to the exams with the proctors to prepare them for that or your send information?[OVERLAPPING]

We do. We have a big proctor training. They have a huge handbook that they are responsible for knowing recruiting practices. One of the hardest [LAUGHTER] parts of the exam thing like we've got a great crew. Every year we gain more students with time accommodations. It's more than doubled over the past few year. Increasing need for more proctors when we have exams on campus. Just recruiting people to take that job is that that's a big part of what the ongoing throughout the year trying to find more people.

Also in the case, eventually, it's one of them can not show up because of whatever reason, so you have to have someone to replace?

We have to have backups and yeah. [OVERLAPPING]

[OVERLAPPING] The runaway to call it someone's oblique.

We will always try to have a few extra people every day [OVERLAPPING] to get breaks and do that backup. Or for the emergency situations, a student shows up half an hour late for an exam, now we go to set them up somewhere with a proctor room. You need a bunch of people around.

Another thing that I know that you do, and I participate in that as well and I think it's a wonderful group. I think we cannot have this conversation without talking about that. Why do we call Talkdesk? Describe [LAUGHTER] talk desk for people who don't know what Talkdesk is. [OVERLAPPING]

Talkdesk it's the platform that ITS uses for the call-in help desk line. When we went home in spring 2020, I realize we're going to need some ways to be able to support students in real time when they're taking their exams. Not just have them call the registrar's line that will kick the voicemail or break them. We weren't using jabber or anything like that and the ridge office. We partnered with ITS to get our own branch in the tree on Talkdesk. During exams you push one, you get exam help. When you call up or press one for exam help and you'll get someone from the registrar's office. We also have Dean of Students Office and accessibility, you guys you know on the line. Depending on what the student's situation is, either the RO troubleshoots with the student or they transfer them to Dean of Students or accessibility services folks who are on the line, it's more of that putting out fires more. Student call it, they're really sick. Student call, their computer froze. Student call they can't figure out where to find the exams, all things that come up. There's the percentage of those who go, "Did you get my exam?" [LAUGHTER]

You get some non-emergency emergency calls too.

What time it starts and what time it ends?

During COVID when we went remote, we started at 06:30 in the morning and went till 8: 30 at night. They were long days, they were early days and they were late.

I remember them.

Now what do we do? Goodness, [OVERLAPPING] 7:30 to 6:30. I think that's right.

We shortened it in two hours.

We shortened it indeed. [LAUGHTER] Now that we don't have students living all over the globe during exams, if they choose to go somewhere else during exams, that's on them. But now that we're working on Eastern time, we've reduced the hours a bit. But then we have this long teams chain as you know for talk desk or even if you're not assigned to be on top desk at the time, you might be following the teams Jane and troubleshooting that way and then also sharing.

It is a fantastic group. I have to bring this because this is another one of those examples of a service or a product that the school offers and Registrars is the one that is on top of all this to make it happen. With a good number of folks working together dealing with the last minute requests and the level of anxiety and worry that the students are on top of their own words in terms of how they are going to deal with their exams and grades and if they were prepared or not. I think the way that the entire group deals with, it's wonderful. I know that we're all tired. I know that we are working all day long in your process and then you have your shifts to be there in that talk desk. And everybody is always on point there with ITS and started to dig connection there and then distributing it to someone. Then if the registrar's get first chunk of the call based on an exam question, but then switch for some reason for their accommodation part of this and then you contact. I think the whole process seems so complicated, but works so well with the folks that you know.

It's a great group.

The way that you can still trying to support each other in that way.

And, and the, I am honest about this, the time that I worked I felt like in mostly COVID time. Then you were so distant from everybody. That was our time to be connected somehow. [LAUGHTER] He's really because this is one of the toughest moments dealing with all the exams and request and everything. But you are still like “oh you are there”, that is a thing.

It's been a little bit of a game changer for me because when we were doing exams on campus, I get here at seven o'clock in the morning and I usually wouldn't leave till seven or nine most of the time at night, so be here 12, 14 hours a day. The Reg office was always like, we're in it. I'd see folks from DOS and accessibility a bit, but it was still an isolated feeling. Now with everybody on that team's channel all day long helping each other troubleshoot problems or just jumping in with a good joke or a GIF or something. It does. It feels so much more like a group effort.

By community.

It really does. It's great and it just light.

People that envy to see that way. I know that sounds like a lot of work and a lot of things that you have to do but in a way is such a cool group talking to each other and joking or dealing with this request and being so I think the message in the end is the support that you are given there for the students. Like if you have a hot line situation that they call and you're here for your services? No, let me help with this

I just watch from when I am observing what you are doing the Registrar's Office, the question is, I was supposed to start at this time. I started two minutes late. Make sure that you write down the time that we started and watch you do, my exam four, I download or upload, whatever the exam is not showing to me. Then I remember someone contact the person that wasn't the shift was let me check this and you'll hear in the background because it was not your shift. That process I think is amazing and really well done and I wanted to go over what we do with the torque desk and all the departments and vote and everybody else there. Now that you are done with exams, everybody finished. What registrar does with all this?

Well, Jem's drag on for one thing because you get students, the one or two students always to have to differ or they drag on, because also following exams and distributing the exam so the faculty and then getting, so they can graded whatever. There's always some ad board questions that come up out of your exam periods, whether students submitted their exam late or something like that. That stuff drags on for a little bit. It's not like a clean December 16th were done.

It's like a schedule and you are done.

It's not like move to our exam period. Now we're going to do something else they can. There's always something that trickles through. That you [OVERLAPPING] But then obviously then we move into grading and then in the spring graduation and all that stuff.

Then the questions when my grades are going to be out.

For sure. When am I going to get my grades.

When it's going to be released always just going to and that's one thing that I really wanted to have this conversation just started and I hope I can meet other folks from where he started off his later as well. Is the Registrars from all the departments that you have here. Of course maybe some are going to say no what you do is this way. But I think registrar have one of the toughest ones because you deal with something that's not too visible in a sense of what can be the process that you follow, a process that not everybody students mostly I would say understand how much it takes. Then sometimes when you say my or when it should be out with just what you said is not something that we've finished our exams on 16 done. Now we're going to prepare the grades and are going to release on that I don't know, 20.

Faculty are always on time with their grades.

Then on top of all this that they don't know, again, the background and how much it takes to have everything prepared, organized, and finalize. It's not at all registrar fault in the end, you were just waiting for decisions in many different levels and until you can finalize your process and then give you that information. I think this is important thing that I would like to do to make it understood that to every department deals with their own work, the work that they do. But the registrar's office, because it's so intricate, like mixed with the faculty with staff, that much stuff in general, but students and faculty, that's a lot of pressure to finalize everything. I had a joke because you have a group of folks that I know. I don't know there are new people working in.

A couple of new we've been relatively new front desk person two and one who's been here going on it'll be a year in December. Those are two newest. Maddie started in June or July and Briana started last December.

Because I know I was going to tease in terms of we work with Megan, Sam Fitzgerald, I was going to how hard it is to work with. [LAUGHTER]

Just because she's still your candy.

Yes. We have a long history. I have to explain a little bit because whereas we have our biggest candy bar, however, for his students. Suddenly out of nowhere, Sam Fitzgerald decide the Registrar's office and she was trying to buy different Candidates. should should go is by on my [inaudible 00:28:26].

She'd also get some from the candy wall.

Go there like a friendly face, hi, Edgar how are you. Then when I go to look at this, they have a complete different types of. [OVERLAPPING].

We were two candy dealers for the.

Mortal enemies.

But she also is a wonderful person like everybody. He's a fantastic group of works there.

It is. It's a great group. We're really fortunate to have such a good staff.

Going back to your the reason when you quit the first time this drives because of their first child, how is everything now in your life?

It's good. I mean, I won't lie. The past two years for everybody has been really challenging.

Getting through COVID was hard. I mean, aside from hard for everyone personally and mentally. I mean, just the logistics of getting this institution through COVID was absurd amount of work for everyone. It's been a rough couple of years, but I feel like we're getting back to normal maybe.

Having that feeling that at least a sense of normality is coming back.

A little bit. I mean, this place is always bunkers.

How are the kids?

The kids are all good. The kids are good.

Did they get through the whole situation and everything?

They handled it really well. I mean, my oldest he just wants to be home playing video games most of the time anyway, so being home for school was no big deal for him. My youngest was in kindergarten at the time when we went home so that was a bummer, that felt like a loss to lose that. But no, they all handled it spectacularly all the little losses, trick or treating, and Christmas time with your family and all that stuff. Like everybody else did, we all found ways around it there and they're all good. They're all doing really well.

That's really great.

Eighth, sixth, and third grade now.

What's the plan for future?

Gosh.

You don't have? [OVERLAPPING]

Right now, I'm treading water right now. I've got three kids to get through school and activities and whatnot. That's the plan. Work, sleep, parent, that's what I do.

What would you say that from all the experience that you have, I know that the regular academic year you have go through all the work that you have to do. But I would say that mostly the exam period is the most difficult parts should deal with.

Can I be honest?

Yeah.

The part I hate the most.

Is the part that I hate the most, but you do this so well.

I remember your Picasso, a line that was, I hate painting. I love that. That stuck with me. It'd be in terms of just the sheer amount of hours it takes. It is a 12-14 hour day every day.

Does it increase the anxiety level? Worrying in terms of everything, knowing that you do this every year in different semesters, but doesn't always come this feeling of, I have to go through this or not.

It doesn't make me anxious, it makes be exhausted, but it doesn't make me anxious. It's funny. You would think that and I noticed this with pretty much all the staff who work on exams. We don't seem to absorb the student's anxiety, obviously the students are in high anxiety and for good reason. I think it seems to have the opposite effect on a lot of the staff who work on exams. They take it the other way to bring everything down.

It's fast paced and it's exhausting, but I don't think of it as an anxious time.

That's a good thing because I think that's a good way to go through such a tough process in terms of work. Because it's such a big operation to have been organized way that it is. I know that in different departments, people have. For example, during the commencement or orientation, is going to be everything okay? You are planning all of this, has to be good because for orientation needs to be good for the students who are coming. You have a good impression, a good feeling about how you are welcoming them here. Doing the commencement is when you are letting them go and entire family comes to see.

They're highly visible things and I can imagine that comes with a tremendous amount of stress running those.

The Registrar’s is the last group that the students see when they graduate.

We are. If we're doing our jobs right, we are not visible at all. People don't know who we are, things just happen. Even with exams being as high-profile as they are, as long as everything is working, it doesn't have that visibility that the people who are running commencement and orientation or alumni events or anything like that. I can imagine that's super anxious.

That's exactly my point in terms of why do we need to talk more about these departments. The job like you do, and I would say that in a level, career services is in that level as well. FSS in the same way because they do a job that in general, the rest of the community, the rest of the campus don't see much. It is vital for the entire campus for what we do here. But people don't see. I hope that people can see a little bit through conversation with every employee how it goes.

Who's going to interview you, Edgar?

I don't know. I'm shy and very introverted. I know that people think that I don't allows, but when I feel comfortable with people that I like and I feel I can open up, but usually I don't know.

You've worn a lot of hats here, you should get interviewed as well.

Quite a few throughout the years, I wanted to tell you how much I admire the work that you do that's why I was worried they would say no to the invitation and would come and talk to me. But I was so interesting to do. I admire the entire group of the Registrar's office and the job that they do, how much they put into it, and how welcoming they always are in the process. Our talk desk that is always there that I truly enjoy. Thank you very much for accepting.

Thank you. Thank you for asking me, and for doing this project. I look forward to listening to the others.

I hope everybody enjoys each one and see because everyone has such a different aspect, should say and stories to tell that I'm so happy for the opportunity to be having these conversations. I'm here for 20 years. When did we both sat down to say, hey, what about your life? How do you do or even the direct word? I'm curious to see how people perceive this and I hope they enjoy as much as they can. Thank you very much. For everybody listening until our next time, see you there. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Edgar. [MUSIC]