



GOING AFTER IT

Mustang Brittany Woodard Learns Success Often Means Leaving the Comfort Zone

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For Mustang Brittany Woodard, leaving the University of Nevada, Reno, three years ago to study and play basketball at Cal Poly meant making the difficult decision to leave her home and her comfort zone further behind.

Instead of two hours from her Sacramento home, Cal Poly would put her five hours away. "I'm a mama's girl, so moving farther away from my mom was nerve-racking," she said. "And I was nervous that I wasn't good enough academically to make it at Cal Poly.

"But I wasn't happy at UNR. The coaches who recruited me had left after my first year, and I wasn't getting with the new ones. My GPA was a 2.4, and Coach Faith (Mimnaugh) was trying to bring me to Cal Poly."

Ultimately, it was her mother who helped her make the decision.

"My mother taught me that if I want something I need to go get it," said the fifth-year journalism major. "And Cal Poly taught me how to do that."

Woodard hasn't looked back. Instead, Cal Poly has forced her to look inward and ahead, continually pushing her out of her comfort zone and toward greater success.

"Since coming here," she said, "I've learned to trust myself and my abilities."

When she walked into her first Cal Poly class, she said, she was overwhelmed by her professors' expectations that she work independently. "They expected me to find information on my own; they put faith in students to be self-directed," she said. "That was new for

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me. I wasn't just being spoon-fed lectures and text."

That, along with Cal Poly's hands-on approach to learning, helped her excel, she said. In response, her GPA rose to 3.0.

"I'm a visual learner," she said. "Learning how things work in the classroom and then actually doing it myself has been great."

Learn by Doing forces her out of her comfort zone, she said, helping her grow as a person. She cites her Cal Poly TV class as an example.

"Patty Piburn is my favorite professor," Woodard said. "She's shown me the ropes and has put me in situations that aren't always comfortable for me. Being on TV, I learned to be more comfortable talking with people and speaking in public. That's really helped by confidence."

Woodard also attributes her growth to the support of her coaching staff. "I have four new moms," she said. "And Coach Faith watches out for me. She's concerned about my future."

Assistant Coach Kari Duperon said Woodard has blossomed into a young woman who consistently represents the university with confidence and integrity.

"Brittany has an infectious attitude that brightens up a room," Duperon said. "She exudes positivity and warmth, as well as a relentless spirit that makes everyone around her believe that anything is possible to achieve."

Mimnaugh attributes Woodard's growth to mental toughness, which has fostered an indomitable spirit, saying, "Brittany has grown as a leader during her time with us."

And with Mimnaugh's help, Woodard is applying to graduate programs at Cal Poly and in Chicago to pursue an MBA in health or business administration – with a goal of having her own elder homecare business.

Her interest in health administration comes from her work with Life Steps, a local nonprofit foundation for elder care, where she is a personal attendant in the senior homemaker program for adults over 60.

Her supervisor, Mercedes Parker, said Woodard is positive, enthusiastic and always has a smile on her face.

"Brittany's client called me personally to tell me how delightful Brittany is," Parker said. "She manages to juggle her very busy life with grace and maturity. She's bright and positive and is energetic in her work, which is important when working with folks dealing with the physical and emotional aspects of aging."

Woodard's future is bright, and she's discovered that no matter where she lands, home is where she makes it. □

Brittany Woodard (left) has found success on the court for the Mustangs and in the classroom, where she is earning a degree in journalism.

