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WKU student, dean swap places for a day

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Oct 25, 2019 Updated 6 hrs ago

1 of 3



Gordon Ford College of Business Dean Chris Shook takes notes during FIN 350 – Risk Management/Insurance class on Thursday, October 24, 2019, at Grise Hall. (Austin Anthony/photo@bgdailynews.com)

Austin Anthony

Coming from out of state this summer to take a job as the new dean of the Gordon Ford College of Business at Western Kentucky University, Chris Shook wanted to get to know students and walk in their shoes.

It's one reason why he swapped places with WKU junior Seth Newby on Thursday, allowing Newby to experience a day as a dean while Shook attended finance classes, ate lunch at the campus food court and lived like any business major would.

"It's helpful for me to understand students, but it's also a chance for us to highlight some of the things we do," Shook said.

By all accounts, Newby settled into the role neatly. He spent his day presiding over a meeting of the college's department heads, having lunch with a potential donor and learning about the university's new budget model.

"They said he did such a good job they probably didn't want me back," Shook joked.

Newby said the experience gave him a fresh perspective.

"You don't really know much as a student, like what a dean actually does," until you get to walk in his shoes, Newby said.

"I think one of the unique things we have here at WKU is like being in the Bowling Green community," he said. "I feel like we have really strong ties in this community."

Newby was selected as part of a fundraising effort among students to support a clothing closet the college maintains for students in need of business attire.

Representing the Gordon Ford College of Business Ambassadors, Newby said his group raised the largest amount of money by selling donuts from the Great American Donut Shop and coffee to their fellow students. The ambassadors huddled to come up with an idea, Newby said.

“I was like, ‘I know what sells on campus: GADS donuts and coffee,’ ” he said.

Through the clothing closet, Shook said he can find common ground with students. As a first-generation college student, he remembers missing out on a job opportunity because he couldn’t afford a suit for an interview.

“A lot of these students are just like I was,” Shook said, adding it’s those students that convinced him to come to WKU.

“We really are making a difference in their lives and that’s important to me,” Shook said.

– Follow education reporter Aaron Mudd on Twitter @BGDN_edbeat or visit bgdailynews.com.

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.

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