

A BLUEPRINT

TO BELIEVING IN YOURSELF



ONE DAY I WANT MY KIDS TO HEAR,
'YOUR DAD WAS A GOOD DUDE.'
THAT'S IMPORTANT TO ME."

Steve Scott
President, Tri-State Steel

Steve Scott brings a prop—a bright, juicy orange—to the third week of Business 115, Blueprint for Personal Development. The class is first in the Blueprint Series, a personal and professional development curriculum unique to UNC Greensboro's Bryan School of Business and Economics consisting of four credits designed to prepare students for the business world. The curriculum for Business 115, taught by C-suite professionals and entrepreneurs, is based on the idea that good business professionals are born from good people.

Scott, president of the Reidsville-based Tri-State Steel, places the fruit on his desk at the front of the classroom. "I tell my students that the world is an orange. The university is an orange," he says. "It's a perfectly lovely piece of fruit, and it's just sitting there filled with juice. You have to choose to squeeze the juice. You have to make that choice, and nobody can do it for you."

Scott's students choose to squeeze the juice. "This is a one-hour class, and I never take attendance—every student is always here," he says. "I tell them on week one of class: After your graduation, when you're at dinner with mom and grandma and they ask which UNCG class meant the most to you, I want you to say, 'There was this one class I had to take my freshman year that changed my life.'"

Leading with Authenticity

Three years ago, Tori Batts (Business Administration) took Scott's class as a freshman. Scott remembers the first day she walked in the door. "That day, it was super hot. The humidity was 1,000 percent, and the AC wasn't working. Tori had walked all the way across campus, and really didn't want any part of it."

In a class designed to help students identify their values and strengths, Batts felt lost. She'd recently transferred and wasn't sure what she wanted to do with her life. "Scared and angry," Scott describes, Tori was struggling to find a job and worried about how she would continue to pay for college.

"If you'd asked me about my strengths at that point, I might have said I'm organized and I have good communication skills," she says. "The list would stop at that point."

One day when she and Scott were talking, Batts smiled—"a million-watt smile," Scott says. He told Batts he believed she had a lot to offer, and he encouraged her to lead with the positive energy shining through her smile.

"That's you," he told her.

Helping students unlock their strengths and lead with authenticity is Scott's own superpower. "We talk all the time about how, in business, you have to be yourself, and you have to be consistent. Business is about people—whether you're a doctor, a bakery owner, or a steel salesman. If you can't connect authentically with people, you are going to fail."



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It makes sense, but for many of Scott's students, "authenticity" is a foreign concept. "This is the first generation that's ever grown up with social media. My 32-year-old daughter didn't have it, but my 25-year-old has never known a world without it," he says. "Many of these kids don't know an authentic world. They don't know who they are beyond who they are on a reel."

Scott takes the time to listen to his students, and he guides them on their path to self-discovery.

"After having taken his class, I know what I can contribute to my personal life and my career," says Batts, who plans to graduate in December with a degree in business administration. "Instead of two basic and common characteristics that a lot of people have, I know that I'm observant, I'm detail-oriented, I'm strong-willed, and the list continues."

That's what Batts led with when she recently landed her dream job with Cone Health's HR department. "I'm a young African American woman and was able to secure a position in a competitive business field," she says. "When I think about my journey—especially when I think back to that first day I walked into Business 115—it leaves me speechless. If that class hadn't been there to teach me about myself, there's no telling where I would be."

Leaving a Legacy

Living authentically isn't easy, Scott knows. "Some of these students don't feel loved, and they are afraid to be themselves." When they are brave enough to share their life experiences with him, Scott listens—"with great intentionality." He tells them it's OK to be vulnerable.

"If you're genuine, then you will be loved for that," he says. "We end up having conversations about really heavy topics like addiction and even suicide. We cry a lot in class, and we are open with the phrase 'I love you.'"

Scott learned how to squeeze the juice from his father, who told him that everyone leaves a legacy. "That's one of life's truths," he said. "The beauty of it is that you get to choose what legacy you leave." ■

Written by Robin Sutton Anders

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