

News Release

Alumni Feature: Richard Navrátil

By Nan Thurston 2015 - Online Student Services Professional on Thursday, June 18, 2020

Richard Navrátil is part of a proud Golden Eagle tradition. As a student-athlete, he contributed to the excitement of our athletics program and excellence of our student body. His story begins in the Czech Republic though he came to the United States as an exchange student in Halstad, Minn. He shared his journey from then to now, which is full of friendships and adventures.

Navrátil continues to add to his story, and it's stories like his that bring our campus the richness of diversity and connections that can impact lives forever.

When he describes the impact UMN Crookston had on his life, the value of being a student-athlete shines through, "At Crookston, I really learned how to balance my studies, work, and intercollegiate baseball, which taught me the true value of hard work and finding a way to get things done." During his junior year he held three jobs, tackled 21 credits in the classroom, and committed to baseball workouts. "Although sleep and rest were rare, thanks to caffeine becoming my best friend, it truly set me up for success later on. It allowed me to get through school loan-free, taught me valuable job skills, and a lesson in how to manage one's time. I wouldn't be able to do that without UMC, the jobs I was able to get, and help from professors and staff there."



Navrátil enjoyed his time at UMN Crookston and found high value in the academic offerings which provided the background and knowledge for him to seek a Master of Business Administration (MBA) following graduation. He states, "The smaller number of students per instructor/faculty member helped ensure each student had an opportunity to connect with their professors and advisers one-on-one." Experiential learning prepared him for success in his current career as a technical sales manager, "Meaningful internships and job experience during the course of my studies was extremely important for me to learn to manage my time properly as well as to prove to future employers I can perform under pressure."



After leaving UMN Crookston, he enrolled in the MBA program at Columbus State University in Columbus, Ga., and worked as a graduate assistant in multiple departments. "I've landed a great opportunity with United Grinding North America, a computerized numerical control grinding machine manufacturer. I moved near Cincinnati and Dayton, Ohio and started my current position in June 2017."

"I was lucky to have been selected to lead a Black Belt project and obtain Lean Six Sigma certifications just one year into my new role. My success with this project then elevated me within two years into a manager position responsible for project management and inside sales departments. My responsibilities include taking care of the entire sales process from order intake, processing, project management, production-related support, all the way to delivery and invoicing."

Navrátil also reserves time to play. He feels most people probably know he is from the Czech Republic and has been in the United States for several years, however some may not know about his baseball history. "I had the honor of representing my home country on the Czech National team a few times in Europe and in the World Championship in Canada prior to my enrollment at UMC. Currently, I continue to play baseball (albeit at an amateur level) as I don't want to break my 22+ year streak of playing baseball."

When asked about those who were special to him at UMN Crookston, Navrátil was clear on his priorities, "The number one person from UMC who should be mentioned is my wife, UMC alumna DeAndra (O'Connell) Navrátil, class of 2014. We were married just outside of Prague in a historic castle in 2017. Since then we have been an inseparable team, moving across the country multiple times until settling with jobs in Ohio."

Speaking to current students on success, Navrátil would recommend trying to get as much work experience during school as possible. It may seem like a tough sacrifice to make at the time, but it will set you up for success down the road and give you a broad spectrum of experience to build on professionally.

Written for the Spring 2020 [Torchlight e-Newsletter](#).

Top photo: Richard and DeAndra (O'Connell) Navrátil on their wedding day.

Bottom photo: Richard Navrátil, Technical Sales Manager for United Grinding North America, Inc.

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