

Going There: Episode 2 - Spies and Spaghetti
December, 2019

A Lake Superior College podcast exploring campus mindfulness, equity, and community hosted with Tara McCoy and Steve Dalager.

In this episode, Tara and Steve interview students Sunhee Go and Dan Riihiluoma about finding community on campus. Ultimately Dustin and Cheyanne from Episode One return and all four discuss whether LSC is indeed "Our Community's College" as the tag-line suggests.

Sunhee - But you guys are very kind. Like you guys say Minnesota kind?

Dan - You gotta be willing to take a shot to the head.

Dustin - And there's like a safe zone where they just leave all these masks behind.

Cheyanne - Because when I look at the community I think it resembles the way LSC is.

Tara - I'm Tara McCoy, and I am a psychology instructor here at Lake Superior College.

Steve - I'm Steve Dalager, and I'm an English instructor.

Steven and Tara - And we're Going There.

Tara - Last time we heard from Dustin and Cheyanne.

Steve - This time on *Going There*, Tara, we'll hear from Dan and Sunhee. And they'll talk about their definitions and experiences with community both inside and outside of LSC.

Tara - Awesome, and at the end of the episode we will aim to get an answer to our question. is LSC "Our Community's College?" Their answers, Steve, might surprise you.

Steve - They might surprise you, too.

Tara - First up is Sunhee, from South Korea. Sunhee has been here at LSC for three semesters and I believe she's taken a few classes with you, right Steve?

Steve - I believe so. Ahe's been in one of my classes all three of those semesters.

Tara - Amazing.

Sunhee - My name is Sunhee from South Korea. I'm at LSC is three semesters and one and one half almost.

Steve - It turns out that Sunhee knows Dan, who we'll hear from in a little bit in this podcast. She knows him from another class.

Sunhee - You know you pronounce my name is perfect.

Dan - Oh really?

Sunhee - Yeah. Nobody say like Sunhee. it's like Asian name so like Sunhee, and it sounds like Sun. But my writing is really Sun, Sunhee but everybody says Soon Hee. My name is not Soon Hee. Soon Hee is my grandma name. Totally different. So I came like five years ago, came here USA and then like first time I came, no family, no friends. Like I never go outside, I felt like you guys are gonna eating me. Like, my first time when I came, it was like some people say, "You are like spy." Told me like straight to my face. I said, "What do you mean this?" Finding other Asians is so hard. This is really, really hard. So I'm actually around no family, not really having friends. I don't have any community, and I focus now for the study. So is coming in school, my main issue is like language problem. So I just focus on the study for English, something like that. So I don't have any community for around me. Yes, like I wish actually, if somebody invite me. I don't have it right now, yeah.

Steve - Do you feel lonely?

Sunhee - Yes, honestly. Sometime it's like, oh, I'm standing by an island, and I feel like...scared.

Tara - Sunhee, as you heard, doesn't feel like she has any community here at LSC or in Duluth.

Sunhee - So my kids is like mixed. And they actually very young came to here.

Steve - Sunhee's children are bi-cultural.

Sunhee - So they forget all my Korean language. So didn't speak any Korean language. They don't know, I speak it sometimes. Very upset, I speak in Korean, like whatever, like swear. They don't understand, thank God.

Tara - Sunhee has a pretty awesome job also. She's a yoga instructor off-campus. I was just wondering if students after the class came up and talked to you.

Sunhee - Nobody came, nobody talked to me. And yeah, kind of sad but . And I'm not talking either.

Dustin - What about your fellow instructors? Do you make connections with them?

Sunhee - Yeah, but they have, everybody have a life, busy. Yoga instructor is their second job. So they have a main job, and they have a child, a life. We sometime in a meeting about work here, but it's like everybody disappear. You know teaching is like I have to make other people understand. And the scary thing is yoga possible for hurting people if you teach it wrong. So I'm very scared, first time. I was so shaking my body, but now it's past one year almost two year case, so okay fine. They understand me. I'm an Asian.

Steve - Sunhee has noticed some surprising cultural differences between Asian students and American students.

Sunhee - It's very different, my country from to here. Students is one thing is anxiety. In my country, yeah probably they have anxiety, I have too, but we're hiding. It's a culture thing, but you guys very comes out naturally. So we are always like hiding for emotion, it's so control. But here the students very very like honest to feel. You guys like, "If I don't like it, I'll just drop it." Like so easily, I said in many cases. But you guys, very kind, like smile all the time. That you guys say Minnesota kind. Oh, okay, good for me.

Tara - Another difference Sunhee has noticed between American and South Korean culture are the daily interaction she has with fellow students.

Sunhee - I like it because Korea is like no privacy, our culture. But here is very private, I like it because I have a lot of painful things in my life, but you guys not asking me. I'm so happy. "What happened, what happened in your life?" Never ask, never ask.

Tara - Is that a good thing?

Dan - Sounds like it.

Sunhee - Yeah, a really good thing. It's like I feel very light. It feels like, whatever in my life is like, I handle it myself. So you guys not judging, it feels like. So I like it. I never exchange any student's phone number or like meeting outside. I saw a student in a restaurant, they're working. So I just say hi, and then, they just say, "Oh okay, I know you." Like that's it. I don't have any deep connection for another student, I wish they would coffee outside, like, but you know. That's what I wish, but I don't have it.

Steve - Sunhee's favorite class is art.

Sunhee - My experiences are really, really good for here. It feels like we're fit especially. My favorite class is art, definitely and very different than my country. It's kind of been my therapy, and then I really like it. But the class is so tight - three credits, six credits, twelve credit - I have to think about it. I have to done! This time if I can make and plan it. That's the main pressure. That part is I don't like, but other part is wonderful. I love this LSC.

Steve - Sunhee's interactions with students in art class have been well, let's let her tell us about it.

Sunhee - Students come to the class and then it's like very stressed about everybody. "I don't know how to manage this? why am I doing it?" I see that, I watch in the face, but I study art even in my country, four year degree were like those. I kind of like very like not easy, but I know what I might have to for myself, so I wanna talk to the other students, and I kind of wanna Art Club, something like that, but I can't ask, and they're just like everybody scared of art. Art is hard.

Steve - I can't lie. Now Sunhee's gonna complain about her English homework.

Sunhee - It's my hardest, it's something sitting on the rock. Especially homework, Steve. But you're making me grow up. I can read. You made me, really seriously. You pressured me. You know this, right? Like pressured me a lot, really, in a good way. I need it, I really need it. I needed something motivated for to push myself, so.

Dustin - So it sounds like you just work, work, work and you have so much stuff, like responsibilities to attend to, to take care of. Is that hard work ethic part of your culture from back home?

Sunhee - Actually that's my country culture. If you're high school students, we're on 'til 11:00, 12:00, sometimes one o'clock we have to study if you want to go college. So and then, this continue until adult.

Dan - Wow.

Sunhee - Yeah, if you go to job, always nine to 10 hour you have to work. So I'm opportunity here more relaxed but still, I wake up like at 4:30 and I pack the kids' lunchbox, and then pack my lunch, and then shower, wake up, are the things I do. And the cleaning house so quickly, and I go to school and I finish work a little bit, and I pick up the kids, come back home, and make dinner. Take care of kids, school, homework, whatever I have to. Things like that, and the cleaning house. That's the whole of my schedule until 9:00. And then nine o'clock over, I have to do my homework. I'm still studying for the USA people. Sorry, but I have to study you guys. Culture thing, language thing, but you guys are very hard to make a friend. Because you guys are very privacy. So it's making relationship glue together really, really hard. If it's Korean people, "How old are you?" First time asking, so we are in the same age. "Oh yes, you that school, okay I know that school." And then we start a conversation. Here in the class, nobody talk, not even eye contacts. Like really, really hard to make friends.

Dan - It is, yeah.

Dustin - It's true, very true.

Sunhee - You is nice, actually. I never have a classmate say "Hi Sunhee," nobody say it. You're the first. You say, "Hi, Sunhee." Like I don't know his name but I don't know. Anyways, thank you.

Tara - Sunhee compares the University of Minnesota Duluth campus to the LSC Campus.

Sunhee - I saw that UMD have a big, big basketball. It's lots of things, the singing, or poem, feels like community. But here is not have it, right? Yeah, because of my country too, in springtime they real, real big festival. Korea campus is huge big. So they all lined up cooking, and students cooking and they're selling, and selling alcohol, too. A lot of drunk students and then like crazy. They drunk everywhere. But it's very fun, really fun.

Steve- Sunhee observes that one way American community college students are different is the large range in ages that we have on our campuses compared to in Korea.

Sunhee - This country in college, its age gap is huge. Like 17 or 16 to older, like sometime in 80s. My summer classes, she is like 70 over. And then my country, same age. So we graduating same time we going to the same college, we were different at different college but same age. So we always have a group. And then number two, I look for very interesting America college don't have a couple. And dating together right?

Tara - Oh dating.

Sunhee - Yeah, here it's not much. I think your life is so busy or whatever. But my country, everybody have a campus couple. So dating was just like, "Okay, yeah school done. I have to dating someone." Like yeah, we were meeting something is a boy and girl things like that. We making like lots and lots of team of the projects together. But that's just possible for the same age.

Steve- So you think because our age range is broader here that actually makes it harder to connect?

Sunhee - That's not my feel, but it's very easy to like one subject. If I have 20 and you have 30, they thinking is different. Maybe like 16 years old think about a game

but like 80 years old, people have never experienced like that one.

Tara - Sunhee sees a need for greater communication on the LSC campus.

Sunhee - Maybe we can look around the community here. Little story like they looking or what is doing something.

Dan - Like a "This Month at LSC" kind of thing.

Sunhee - Whatever events are.

Steve - I find it interesting how Sunhee is able to laugh so much about some things that are clearly painful about how isolated she is. But let's move on now, and let's hear from Dan who hasn't come from quite so far away.

Tara - Dan, could you share a little bit about yourself?

Dan - Daniel Riihiluoma.

Steve - And your favorite ice cream?

Dan - Cherry Garcia. And I'm from Cloquet, which is nowhere near as far South Korea. But this year, I started at LSC this January, I think. So far it's been a lot of fun. This is my second time going to college. The first time was just awful. I dropped out pretty quick. It's been about a decade. And I just, I'm just so much more invested and I mean, really enjoying my classes, and just the overall experience has been a lot more positive than my last time around.

Steve - Where did you go to school the last time around?

Dan - I went up in Bemidji. Not that Bemidji is a bad school. It's all good, but I was immature and really not ready for any of that pressure or responsibility. And now, I'm slightly more ready. I grew up in Cloquet, which is like a stone's throw away from Duluth but I never really hung out here much. I am kind of a farm kid. My parents had a little hobby farm, a good 20 acres or so. So I spend most my time out and about in the country over by Fund du Lac Reservation actually,

so no, I don't feel part of Duluth community. I just wasn't a part of growing up, and then I moved away, and came back, and I just spend most my time commuting. So you know.

Steve - Do you think your experience would be different if you live somewhere in Duluth?

Dan - Yeah, yeah, it would certainly because I'd be getting coffee or just wandering around. 'Cause I thought I'd wander. I'm not afraid of people. Because I'm larger than most people. So I'm not afraid of wandering around areas and just say hi to people like Sunhee. Well yeah, so if I did live in Duluth, I would certainly feel more a part of that community. I'd just be involved in more than just driving past. My first couple of weeks, every time there's a new semester, my first couple weeks here, I've always just been really yeah, sweaty palms and anxious. I wanna get to classes as soon as possible. I don't wanna spend time out in public areas. And then after a while, it just settles down. So that's just a different kind of pressure and anxiety. And for me, I don't really feel like I found a real community. I've only been here for this semester, second semester. Haven't been to any clubs or anything like that, and haven't really made a concrete friend-group, whatever that you wanna call it. But I've made friends, and I've hung out a little bit. And the community I most feel attracted to or a part of is probably the community of just older students, which is a fairly good sized group here. It feels nice. So you can have mature conversations about how stupid you used to be.

Tara - Do you have a specific moment at LSC you'd like to highlight, Dan?

Dan - Student Success Day. That's a solid one because I went to two Student Success Days so far. The first one, I went snowshoeing with Steve here, actually, which was a lot of fun. There's about like, 20, 30 people, all lined up like ducklings following him up a river, which worked out and no one died. No one died, so it was great. I think everyone's helping each other and people falling over, and having to pull out of snowdrifts, and Steve's snowshoes broke at the very end. It was a good experience. It was a bit exhausting.

Sunhee - The snowshoes the round the circle on the feet and they're walking like that?

Dan - Mm-hmm.

Sunhee - Oh okay, I see.

Dan - Big old Mondo Shoes. You keep your legs really wide.

Sunhee - I saw the picture.

Dan - Yeah, that's all I really remember. But that's Student Success. Oh, and there's pizza. I remember there's pizza and snowshoeing. So that was good. And in this one, I did happen to run into a buddy of mine who I met at one of my classes the previous semester. Hadn't seen him for the entire of this semester. I thought he like died or something. I hadn't seen hide nor the hair of him. But I ran into him, and we had a nice chat. And he's been working up at that farm, up over LSC, which I didn't even know was there. So he brought me up there, and showed me around, and there is some cool stuff happening up there, and I got to try the juiciest damn tomato I've ever had, truly outstanding, and some really good beans.

Tara - So if you were to label the community that you felt a part of during that experience, could you narrow it down?

Dan - Hard to say, well, it was a student community because everyone was a student. But everyone's from different walks of life, and different classes, and I didn't know like anyone on snowshoeing. And like because I hadn't seen that guy for like a solid six months, previous to that. So it's hard to really say it was a community, so much as just a happy accident.

Tara - What made you feel included in those? So you're saying you didn't know anybody. You're doing this new experience, but you felt included?

Dan - Right. It was a physically exhausting thing, and people are helping each other, and everyone's all in this together, and that was the snowshoe thing. And the other one, it was just nice to run into a guy who's happy to see you, and then shows you something he thinks is cool and you think it's cool too. And that's nice to have. Sometimes you're not so lucky.

Tara - One way to find or at least search for a community is their food, free food.

Dan - I've gone to a what are called Cultural Stews. The first time I went because I assumed there would be stew, which is as it happens is not the case. But there was ice cream. So not a total loss, it was fun. What can we do to get more people into community, into events, and all that? So we were just like a group of maybe a dozen random people who showed up just talking about it, writing down suggestions, which was nice. And then a couple of weeks ago, I went to an Italian Cultural Stew, but I had a class when it was happening. So I only got there for like the last 10 minutes. And I went back because there was free spaghetti. So I went there, I was crossing my fingers that there'll still be some left, and there was. So I sat down, and I got to watch a slideshow on Rome, and then I ate spaghetti, and had fun just hanging out and ate spaghetti. I met a Brazilian fellow, and had nice chat about Brazil. And how Brasilia is the capital because it's central, not because it's important.

Steve - You attended that event by yourself.

Dan - Yes.

Steve - Would you say you felt community when you were there?

Dan - Yes, I wanted to bring other people. Like I had a class happening, so I kept telling everyone about the spaghetti. "There's free spaghetti. 'Cause you can get free spaghetti," and I was the only one who was tempted enough to actually go. it's a shame. But yeah, I went, and I was alone, I had fun.

Tara - So it sounds like even if you aren't forming lifelong friendships after these events, you still feel like you're part of something even if it's not this like grand feeling of part of something.

Dan - If everyone I met became my best friend. I will have a really hard time living. There's a degree of relationships. There is you know, random people you meet, acquaintances, weird friends, close friends, and then like one or two best friends. That's how I grade it any way. So right now, I'm building more acquaintances. And we'll see if they can climb the ladder.

Steve - Like Dustin from Episode One, Dan also has connected with people through his academics.

Dan - Just last week that I had to fill out a survey, or had to make a survey and then hand it out to people. And that's a great way to meet new people. It's like, "Hey, you want to take a survey?" So you know, I did that. I walked up to a random person I never talked to in my core training class said, "Hey, you wanna take a survey?" And for whatever reason, they said yes.

Tara - Did you have a conversation with them?

Dan - Yes, a little bit afterwards and before. Before I clarified what the survey was about, and to certify that I'm not a creep. And after just like discussing the survey, and then her opinion on it. Steve's got a couple of strategies I've seen in the years. I've had two of his classes now, and one of the ones that he like to do is he likes to let people get comfortable in their groups that they happen to form at the beginning of the year, and then throw them all in, mix them all up, and then reform under the new groups. So you have to meet new people, being dragged to strangers. And learn that they're not gonna eat your face.

Tara - It's all common concern.

Dan - Yeah, well.

Steve - Could you say that group work in a class helps build community?

Dan - It can, depends on the group, don't it? There's always that. There's always a chance that there's gonna be that one student who just does all the work, who doesn't interact with anybody else. And the rest of the group don't interact, and they're just looking at their phone. Nowadays, people look at their phones when they look at other people. So it's very easy for a group to act like a group, but not actually be a group.

Tara - Like Sunhee, Dan has also made observations to how age plays a role in community-building here at LSC.

Dan - If an 80-year-old tried to induce a conversation about "SpongeBob SquarePants", it would be a very different feeling than if someone my age did.

Tara - But you could argue that if they were 80, they could be a grandparent and are familiar with it because of grandchildren.

Dan - They would still have a very different experience of "SpongeBob SquarePants" due to their age and their experience as grandparents than I would.

Tara - So having that different experience, you're saying even if they've experienced and are familiar with something, that their personal experience with it is different.

Dan - It's like art. Art is showing your point of view to other people. No matter what you medium is. It's how you see the world in a medium that other people can look at and see how you see things. But my point is that, yeah. People have different experiences, and they've got the same exact thing, and see something different from someone else.

Tara - And you're saying that difference is exacerbated by age.

Dan - Right, yes.

Steve - And are you also saying then that when communities form, they form more easily if people have shared experiences?

Dan - Yes.

Steve - Like they're all the same age. And they all watched "SpongeBob SquarePants" at the same age.

Dan - Right or if they went through like boot camp together. That's a very strong shared experience that they went through together. It's very specifically designed to make them form bonds with each other.

Steve - Like statistics.

Dan - Like statistics class. That's exactly what I was going for, yeah.

Dustin - Just like stats though.

Tara - All roads lead to stats.

Dustin - Eventually.

Tara - So Steve, we've heard Dustin, Cheyanne, Dan, and Sunhee talk about community at LSC and the Duluth area. But what's the question we set out to answer?

Steve - Tara, the question was, is LSC "Our Community's College?" It's our tagline. It's on our promotional materials. Are we really?

Tara - That's a great question. That's what we have to find out.

Steve - We return to these four to see if we can get to the bottom of this question.

Tara - I'm excited. First up, Dan.

Dan - There's a lot of different kinds of communities in the world. I spent so many years basically all on just because I was waiting for people to reach out to me, to get to know me of their own free will. No one does that, not here really. So I got just sick and tired of it, and I started reaching out to other people, and you gotta be willing to just take a couple wraps on the knuckles, couple of times. But some people do not want to get to know you. And then, there's people who do, and then they don't anymore, and that hurts, too. You gotta be willing to take a shot to the head.

Tara - So Dan, is LSC, our community's college?

Dan - No, I don't think LSC is our community's college as it is right now because one of the most notable trends you can find on campus is as soon as classes are over, there's a swarm in the parking lots, and just people leaving. They're here to take a class, and then they're gone. I just think that a community is more than just a place to mingle. It's a place to feel like a home. So yes, I'm meeting people from Brazil and Fond du Lac reservation, and South Korea, but are we really like bonding and creating memorable experiences? When I say community, I'm talking about basically a home away from home kind of thing, rather than just a place where you can feel welcomed.

Steve - Dan, what would it look like then if LSC were our community's college?

Dan - Just community activism. It's shoveling old people's sidewalks. It's using your students as a workforce in the community, in like a volunteer way.

All - Volunteer.

Steve - There were air quotes around the word volunteer, for those of you who are only listening.

Dan - You can't pay 'em.

Steve - Can an institution like Lake Superior College create situations where shared experience then leads to stronger community?

Dan - Yes.

Steve - All right. We have an answer.

Tara - Yes. Now, we're gonna hear from Sunhee. And Steve, how does Sunhee view the question is LSC "Our Community's College?"

Steve - Well, we'll let her speak for herself but I would say she sees LSC's role in the community, I think, a lot like the people who maybe, created the catchphrase, "Our Community's College", were intending it.

Sunhee - I feel like training and then send to the job. It feels like. So it's training, and then, go to the work. Like education business.

Steve - Education business?

Sunhee - Yes, that's what it feels like, just honestly.

Dan - So the fast food of college

Steve - Get in, get what you need, get out.

Sunhee - Yes.

Steve - No community going on there.

Tara - Dustin, as you'll hear, has a slightly different perspective on the question.

Dustin - Okay, so I have a little bit of a different perspective than Dan and Sunhee.

Sunhee - That's good.

Dustin - So what I see and what I really enjoy, and what I identify LSC as the community's college, I would say yes. Because you do have people from South Korea, and you do have people from Cloquet, and I'm from the Fond du Lac Reservation, and you talk to people from Brazil, and I share classes with kids from Two Harbors. And it's just taking people from all these different places, and it brings us together. And to me, that is community. And I think that it reaches far. Like this college has a long reach, and there's something bringing people here. I don't know if it's the low costs, and then a lot of my professors, one of their main concerns is the cost of books. As we all know, like the cost of books is really high in the US. And they're like, "You can go and get a brand new textbook, which is gonna cost you a lot of money, or you can use this online book, and it's free, and it teaches you the same material. And it's your choice." And if my professors are thinking about how much money I need to spend to make it through college, then they're concerned about me as a person and where I come from. And to me, that really resonates with the people who care about you, and in community, people care about you.

Steve - So Dustin, can you expand a little bit on your vision of LSC as "Our Community's College?"

Dustin - I guess I would expect to see a place where people from different areas of the community - because you have like high-income parts of Duluth, and then low-income parts of Duluth - and they're obviously different and apart from each other, and there's a lot of division between these communities. So when I think about the community's college, I think of other places where people can come from all these different backgrounds and ethnicities and cultures. Or they can come, and there's like a safe place, like a safe zone, where they can just leave all these masks behind, and they can just come together, and get to know each other, and realize that they are not so different as their socio-economic status dictates, or the way they were brought up. This is a place where we can come together and learn from each other. I think about UMD and being an auditorium with like 170 other students listening to a

lecture or a classroom with like 20-25 people in it, and there's a difference to me. The smaller class, actually would feel more like a home for me.

Tara - Last but not least, we have Cheyanne. And she's gonna get the last word on is LSC "Our Community's College?"

Cheyenne - I think it means that the college should closely relate to how the community is built. So I agree that LSC is our community's college. Because when I look at the community of Duluth as a whole, I think it resembles the way LSC is. And I think that's a good thing.

Steve - That is a pretty good thing, Tara.

Tara - Well I mean, we got an answer to our question, right?

Steve - Well, I think we got multiple answers to our question. So I was thinking about this. And it seems like we have opportunities for community to be created on our campus, which is good, but the catchphrase, our community's college implies some kind of connection between the campus and the community.

Tara - I agree.

Steve - Do you see that happening here in what Dustin, Cheyanne, Dan and Sunhee are saying?

Tara - Yeah, it seems like each of them feels that Lake Superior College can foster a sense of community on campus in some way, shape, or form. But their perspective of how we go out beyond the walls of Lake Superior College differs.

Steve - Yeah, I see in what Dustin says when he talks about how his being here at LSC actually pays dividends out in the community. That implies that we are our community's college.

Tara - Right.

- Also Sunhee, when she talks about LSC being education business, students come here and they go to work. I think that's kinda like what our marketing people would probably like to be thinking about.

master, Kelli Hallsten-Erickson; prison-breaker, Theresa Leopold; sound-breaker, Brandon Leno; and finally to a Band Called Truman for rockin' the theme song. Mic drop.

Tara - Right because we train the students, and they go off into the workforce within the community, right?

Steve - Right.

Tara - Dan, however, felt that he wanted a place, a home away from home, which LSC doesn't seem to offer him. But we also don't have dorms on our campus.

Steve - That's true and so in the end, we don't really have a nice tidy answer here.

Tara - We don't.

Steve - But I think we can agree that there's room for continuing to wrestle with this question of how we create better community on our campus and connect that to the larger community around us.

Tara - Yeah, and Steve? You know what else I think would help?

Steve - No, what?

Tara - Offering free food.

Steve - Definitely free food. That would be free spaghetti, popcorn.

Tara - Have stew at the Cultural Stew.

Steve - Stew, pizza, you bet, you name it. Free food and maybe something to drink with it.

Tara - Oh definitely.

Steve - But not alcohol. Sorry, Sunhee.

Tara - Can't do that here on this campus.

Steve - All right, that is this Episode Two of *Going There*.

Tara - I'll see you next time, Steve.

Steve - All right, see you, Tara.

Steve - You've been listening to *Going There*, a Lake Superior College podcast. Special thanks to puppet-