# Health and Human Science Matters Season 4, Episode 4: James Graham

James Graham :

One of the main reasons I was excited about coming to CSU was the opportunity to apply my HSR, my health services research, to the community-based support services they were doing. The staff with again interviews and talking to people, they are literally providing life-changing services to individuals with disabilities. And so you don't have to be a PhD to recognize or appreciate those impacts. And so when I'm advising people on the academic path, you got to know the rules. But at the same time there are more important things that you can not wait as long as I did to start appreciating or highlighting.

Matt Hickey:

Sometimes when you're thinking about impact, you can leave the factor part of it out for a while, right?

James Graham :

Exactly. Start with impact, factor will take care of itself.

Avery Martin:

Welcome to Health and Human Science Matters, a podcast by Colorado State University's College of Health and Human Sciences. I'm your co-host and digital media strategist, Avery Martin.

Matt Hickey:

And I'm Matt Hickey, associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies. In our college, we make it our mission to optimize human health and wellbeing through discovery and innovation. Don't just take our word for it. Each episode we sit down with people who fulfill that mission, our college faculty and staff. And today all the way from occupational therapy, we got a friend and colleague, James Graham. James, welcome.

James Graham :

Thank you, Matt.

Matt Hickey:

Glad to have you here with us.

James Graham :

Yeah, no, I appreciate you letting me be part of the series you got going here. It's pretty impressive. I like the idea of this.

Matt Hickey:

We're having fun. It's been a pleasant surprise since the genesis of the idea a couple years ago, which really neither one of us can take credit for. So we're looking forward to getting to know you. We know you to varying degrees I think in a professional setting. But over the next 45 minutes to an hour, we're going to inquire about your pathway and family and where you grew up and what possessed you to want to be an academician and all these things. So we'll look forward to hearing some stories. But we want to start with James at CSU. When you think about big ideas, big challenges, big problems that you and your team pursue, how would you characterize that?

James Graham :

Yeah. They are getting bigger these days, aren't they? I really have two distinctive research lines and they're distinct in name only as they are suspiciously similar in approach and intent. So my longstanding research program has been health services research. And so it's this interdisciplinary study of access to care, cost and quality of care, and of course outcomes of care. And so using real world data, we study normal people in receiving routine care in everyday healthcare settings. But since coming to CSU, I've added community services researcher, so labeled by myself, to my research program. And so in the same vein we study normal people receiving regular support services in everyday communities or educational settings. And so it's applying my old skills and my training to the CSU needs and the groups I'm working with. So I've really enjoyed it.

Matt Hickey:

And I'm going to ask you to unpack that a little bit more. We'll of course, I suspect, circle back to it a couple times. But when you're studying healthcare services, is it barriers to access? Are there sort of demographic differences that emerge?

James Graham :

Much of what I study is health policy and how health policy then impacts either access or quality or outcomes of care. So I started in 2005, '06 and so there's Affordable Care Act, there's the IMPACT Act, and there's major legislation over the last 10 years or 15 years that was unprecedented prior to that. So that's shaped my focus is how providers react to policy changes. And it's an annual thing, but there's been a few monumental events and times. And so it really comes down to, there's a lot of methods underneath health services research. But the natural experiment I guess is where I fall as my primary interest.

And like I've said, I've typically focused on health policy. But prior to CSU, I was on the coast of Texas, the University of Texas Medical Branch and we went through several significant hurricanes. And so that instant opportunity for, not just natural experiment, but natural disaster experiments and so we were able to look at how... because we talk about the pandemic, lockdown and everything else, but everything was obliterated basically for months at a time so we could do those natural experiments. At the time, it was all healthcare was what I was studying.

I don't know how aware you guys are of recent events. But there was a pandemic a few years ago.

Matt Hickey:

You don't say.

James Graham :

Yeah, yeah. Read about it. So that too, and that's a once in a lifetime opportunity for people who evaluate. So if you look at the literature now, it's just flooded with post-pandemic lessons learned and where we go from here. We'd submitted a couple grants early on, NIH grants to try to jump on the COVID bandwagon, I do primarily rehabilitation research, but to look at some of that stuff. But none of those hit. So I'm not one of those opportunists who have contributed to post-COVID literature. That was the kind of scope is what I'm talking about, is what we're doing.

And now that I'm here at CSU, we don't have to wait for the next pandemic to look for those things. And so what I've learned too, health policy and I can say with probably 50% accuracy, certainty that policy whether it's a national health Medicare policy or more state or local or organizational, they usually deliver on the focus intent. And I think we just moved to a doctoral program. So it's our first cohort with the holistic approach. It is a much more diverse class and enrollment.

But the cautionary tale there is that the more interesting and provocative findings are usually in the collateral changes or the unintended consequences of those policies or initiatives. And so that's where the focus needs to be. It can't just be looking at the class photo before and after, look at a couple demographic or socioeconomic profiles and say, "See? We delivered," because it's the resources and it's the persistence and graduation and satisfaction, all those things that go into that need to be... When they aren't on the sublisting of the policy, someone needs to take the initiative to follow up on those. So that's kind of two examples of bigger healthcare stuff. And then you locally, you don't need grant funding to evaluate internal policies or changes.

Matt Hickey:

So I want to, for the sake of our listeners, talk a little bit about what one means when one says a natural experiment. So those of us that are experimental scientists might think of bringing people into my lab setting and in some way I'm constraining or manipulating their environment. That's the experimental approach that probably first comes to mind. So tell our listeners what a natural experiment is.

James Graham :

And that's just what I mean. It's much messier. So the real world is a lab, but you don't control those parameters. And so it literally is just observing. It's observational research [inaudible 00:07:00]. You probably teach research methods too. There's all these... Quasi experimental, all these kinds of things. If you don't get all the three criteria for a randomized controlled trial, it's some other class. And that's what this is. It's just observational research. And it's a slippery slope or a difficult thing for people to understand because you can, "Oh, look at all this data I have." You throw it in, you get answers, but not necessarily the correct answers. And so a lot of it's through different statistical design and the different setup in how you make sure you do control for as much as you can control for it. And the rest, you usually have a pretty big limitation section in this kind of research.

Matt Hickey:

But it's important because it's an effort to understand how health systems operate, absent some manipulation of some experimental setup, because we all know the spectrum is of experimental research has got limitations on both ends. When we get into lab settings where we're control freaks, how well does that translate to the real world? Often not very well because all the natural interplay of different dynamics. We're trying to squash that. Right?

James Graham :

Exactly. And so if you want to get nerdy on it, which you clearly do, this is the total opposite. So the experimental research is focused on internal validity mechanistically, whereas the observational research is total external validity. It's, what's the application? And like I said, they both have limitations. But that's where my whole career has been is in more of the observational external validity. How is this impacting people? So you mentioned health systems. That's where I spend a lot of my prior time. And so now everything has a buzzword now, "Learning health systems." They're not doing it for academic street cred. They're doing literally to improve quality improvement and program evaluation kind of thing. But I think CSU should be an educational learning system. And so I think you can apply those same methods to whatever your services or your role is. And so that's what I'm trying to do in the Center for Community Partnership. So it's a work in progress.

Matt Hickey:

As is everybody's career, right?

James Graham :

Yes, exactly, yes.

Matt Hickey:

Very good. Well, we want to wind the clock back a little bit, so if you're willing to talk to us about your pathway. So how did James get to CSU and be leading the CCP and doing all the things that he does? And this has ranged over our conversations. Where did I grow up? And family influences, we're always interested in mentors. People that really had a significant impact. And many of them probably still do, right? So talk to us about that pathway of yours.

James Graham :

Yeah. Well, I grew up in rural northern Wyoming.

Matt Hickey:

No kidding.

James Graham :

Yeah.

Matt Hickey:

Is there anything that's non-rural in Northern Wyoming?

James Graham :

I know. Is that redundant? Yeah. So it was a small town, wasn't exactly a preparatory academy for road scholars.

Matt Hickey:

Are you willing to name the town?

James Graham :

Kelly, Wyoming.

Matt Hickey:

Kelly, Wyoming.

Avery Martin:

Kelly, Wyoming.

James Graham :

450 people. We just lived right on the outskirts of town there. Our roads got paved when I was a junior. We had dirt roads in town until I was a junior. So anyway, my brother and I have to share the first generation classification. So he's two years older than I am so he was the first one to go to college. But then he pursued a religious mission overseas while he was in college. So that gave me a chance to catch up. So I was the first one from our family to graduate from college. But then ultimately he went on and got an Ivy League PhD from Brown. I've been state school my whole life. But all I say is, who's doing the podcast now?

Avery Martin:

Exactly.

James Graham :

So yeah, we both came out of there and both went on to get PhDs so it's unexpected but it's-

Matt Hickey:

It's really interesting that both of you had doctoral degrees as first gen students. So how did even the idea of college, let alone graduate school, cross your mind?

James Graham :

Yeah. Neither one of them went to college, they worked. But they clearly knew that the times had changed. So I don't remember being pressured or anything else, but it was just first of all, I had my brother as a model, so I was like, "College."

Matt Hickey:

So where did you go for undergraduate degree?

James Graham :

I went to University of Utah, go Utes. So then I had started a journey. And so anyway, I studied biology and chemistry and kind of going down to basic Matt Hickey kind of guy. Got interested in that.

Matt Hickey:

Luckily you escaped.

James Graham :

Actually, then I went to chiropractic school after that. So I was down in Dallas and I really enjoyed that because my whole thing was I was interested in the human optimal function, human performance. And that just seemed like a great... and it is, it was a great education. So then I practiced for three years out in Indiana and enjoyed that, but it was in the nineties and it was more business than practice. I was self-employed so I had to do it all myself. And I started teaching at a technical college that was basically a pre-health profession school. And I really, I just loved it. I'm sure I wasn't good at it, but I thought I was good at it at the time. And I thought, "Man, this would be great." Just at the time I thought, "I'll do both. I'll practice a little, get a faculty job and do that." But then and probably now, they don't really recognize the clinical doctor of chiropractic degree. So I applied for a few faculty jobs, couldn't get it. So I thought, "I'll just get a master's and that will prove to people that I'm an academic."

So I went down to Beaumont, Texas, Lamar University. I got a master's in health and kinesiology and I taught a few classes there and again loved it. But while I was there, I was working in this, it was called the Human Performance Research Lab. I think the next year I became the coordinator, whatever the leader of it was. And I was doing research. So I had some MDs from the community and we were doing research. Like, "Man, forget teaching. I really love doing research. So anyway, this is not the path you'd want to take to academia, but it did work out for me.

And so I thought, "Yeah, I'm coordinator. I got a few things going here. Now I can apply for faculty job." Still nothing. And so one of the guys working there in the performance lab that we were running there, he was from Buffalo. He got his MD at University of Buffalo. And I didn't know much about it, but I knew I wanted do more physical medicine and rehab kind of thing. And they had one of the few programs in the country back then. So I then shuffled off to Buffalo and I got my PhD there and then I could finally get the job.

Matt Hickey:

And the PhD was in a rehab?

James Graham :

It's called rehabilitation sciences.

Matt Hickey:

Yeah. Cool. Okay. So I'm looking for mentors here along the way. And again, it sounds like maybe this orthopedic surgeon. And maybe not a mentor in a sense of a durable thing, but a nudge or something along those lines.

James Graham :

No, it was a suggestion. He had an uncle there. He didn't live in Buffalo at the time. That's when I started looking. Again, this is nineties and so it wasn't like a vast Google search to find these things. So it was word of mouth still at that time for me at least. So anyway, so I got up to Buffalo and my PhD experience wasn't exactly stellar, nothing to do with Buffalo. But I did win the lottery on my postdoc mentor. And so Ken Ottenbacher is his name and he was literally a pioneer in the field of rehabilitation research. So he was down in Galveston at UTMB there. In fact, I was at Buffalo on a grant that he'd written, a training grant.

Matt Hickey:

Oh, no kidding. That's interesting.

James Graham :

One of the NIDILRR ARRT grants. And he'd left two years or so before I got there. But anyway, so I knew of him from that. He basically funded my education. I never met him.

Matt Hickey:

Followed him on down to Galveston.

James Graham :

And he didn't know me. But he was actually on my dissertation committee and he was actually a giant in the field too. But finally graduated and I went down to Galveston to University of Texas Medical Branch there to interview with Ken with nothing more than a recommendation and a pending PhD in three months.

Matt Hickey:

A wing and a prayer, right?

James Graham :

Yeah, it was. I would not be competitive. The lesson here is networking matters and your recommendations are important at that stage. But anyway, because of that recommendation alone, he took a chance on me and followed by giving me unique opportunities, followed by giving me critical responsibilities. And so they say, "Don't stay where you did your postdoc." But I was like, "I'm not letting go of this." And so I went from postdoc to full professor, director of the PhD program, any other roles within 12 years there at UTMB. And then it clearly launched me to get this job here, so all of that. And none of that would've happened without his dedicated mentoring and support. So I try my own little mini me way to... I remember that when I'm supporting. I clearly can't be Ken Ottenbacher. But it was life changing for me. And so I think that's what mentoring and advising's all about.

Matt Hickey:

There is a generational aspect to this for all of us, right-

James Graham :

Yeah.

Matt Hickey:

... in many ways. So let me pause before we talk about this transition from Galveston to CSU, a little closer to home. So younger son of a rural family from Wyoming with two doctoral degrees. So who's got the bragging rights, you or your brother?

James Graham :

Yeah. Again, Brown Ivy League. It's like [inaudible 00:15:55], "Go to a land grant university. Geez."

Matt Hickey:

Talk to me when you get your second doctor.

James Graham :

Exactly. Yeah. Like I said, I wouldn't suggest that path for anybody. But clearly it worked out for me.

Matt Hickey:

So you're rocking and rolling at Galveston, you transition from a post and in a short period of time you moved through the academic ranks to full professor. And then somehow an opportunity at CSU comes across your radar screen. Talk to us about that. How did you become aware of it and how did we manage to recruit you?

James Graham :

Yeah, it was actually Pat Sample.

Matt Hickey:

Of course, yeah.

James Graham :

She was a professor here and she was the chair of the search committee. It was like anytime out, you do your normal kind of public thing. But then you're like anybody else on the list. And so she'd contacted me. I'd actually, side note I'd applied just for faculty kind of position at CSU four or five years prior and didn't get it. But I'd met everybody and Pat knew who I was and then clearly my career continued on.

And so when she reached out and I was like, "No, been there, tried that before. No, thanks," she said, "No, but this is the director of the Center for Community Partnerships." And I was like, "Tell me more." And so as I got to reading that job description and I remember it because I interviewed a little bit. My previous job I applied for had nothing to do with that, but I was impressed by it. So then when Kathy Shelley had retired a few years prior and so when she told me about that, I said, "Let me look, let me think." And I was just totally captivated by the idea. So that's my applied and I came up and interviewed and got even more rejuvenated. I was just excited about the opportunity.

Matt Hickey:

And when was this.

James Graham :

It worked out.

Matt Hickey:

Our listeners [inaudible 00:17:29].

James Graham :

I don't know when I started. It was a long process, but I got here in March of 2018. So those interviews probably would've been in the spring of 2017. Might have been earlier. It took me a while to unwind everything I had going on. So I had to delay the start date, but it was 2017-ish.

Matt Hickey:

So you're coming up on five, six years in the saddle.

James Graham :

Five years next month. Yeah.

Matt Hickey:

Good. And so talk to us about what you do on a day-to-day basis. You got a team, it's not just a one man show. What does a day in the life at the CCP look like?

James Graham :

There is no routine day there. So I have staff of administrative professionals and so they provide supported education, support, employment, health and independent living services for CSU students and individuals from the community with disabilities. And so they've been doing that for 30 years. Different formats of programming, but just really a foundational service organization in the community, let alone CSU. And so that's the daily grind I guess is the supported services. And then on top of that, clearly just the research component that I was tasked with leading.

Matt Hickey:

Post-doc's part of your team as well?

James Graham :

Yeah. So I supervise four... Currently I have four PhD students and a post doc.

Matt Hickey:

And these PhD students, again because our listeners will... There's a PhD in sort of rehabilitation-

James Graham :

We have a PhD program in addition to the occupational therapy doctorate, the clinical degree program.

Matt Hickey:

Which is brand new, the OTP.

James Graham :

Yeah, started this last summer. We have a PhD in occupational and rehabilitation science. So it's a combination of kind of the occupational science theory and then the rehabilitation science, which is more my specialty I guess.

Matt Hickey:

Cool. So several PhD students and several postdocs.

James Graham :

Yep. I have one postdoc right now. I've had a few over the years, but I got one current. And really academia can get you down from time to time. It's just a grind and the pandemic didn't help anybody's motivation. But I just got an incredible cohort right now. And so just their passion and their potential is really inspirational for me right now. And so it just reminds me of how fun my journey was back in the day and also how rewarding research teaching and advising can be. So I'm really enjoying this current cohort I have.

Matt Hickey:

That's great. Now your PhD trainees land work. Give us some examples of what are they doing now?

James Graham :

I have, do you remember, Julie Silversidel? A postdoc with me. But right after she graduated and now she's just running the capstone process for our OTD program. So that's a fun one because I got to work with her. She was great support and help for me in the center and now she's leading that thing and she's a colleague so I don't have to email her. I can just check on her every day.

Avery Martin:

Yeah.

Matt Hickey:

Good.

Avery Martin:

That's great.

Matt Hickey:

Now physical location, you've bebop-ed a little bit around campus I think, right?

James Graham :

Yeah. Originally we were in the OT building on the oval there, but 2019 we moved her to Alder Hall, which is just down the road here from Bruce, right next to the old field house. And so the cool part is just this last summer, three other centers from the college moved in. And so we got the prevention research center, the social work research center in human animal bond in Colorado.

Matt Hickey:

Yeah, that's pretty cool to have those-

Avery Martin:

Cool neighbors.

James Graham :

Yeah, it's very nice. And it's all CHHHS. And so it's nice just to have additional center energy and also that collaborative potential just right down the hall.

Avery Martin:

For sure. So let's unpack community partnerships a little bit more. So how are you creating partnerships within the community and what are the eight units under the CCP? Because it's definitely sprawling. I'm not putting you on the spot, you don't have to name them all. But how are you making connections and impacting the community? Because it's in the title.

James Graham :

Yeah, exactly. And it was purposeful in the title.

Matt Hickey:

We didn't warn you about the pop quizzes, did we?

James Graham :

I know. We got eight programs? And it was purposeful in the title. They actually rebranded it several probably decades or so ago. So it all predated me clearly. We have contracts with the division of vocational rehab to provide supported employment. We clearly have personal relationships with local employers who support our participants in there. And then I don't dare start listing campus partnerships or I'll miss some, but Student Disability Center and all the other units under student affairs. We partner a lot with the Adult Learner Veterans Services center on a lot of our veteran programming. They've just been longstanding and they have to value neurodiversity and they also have to subscribe to the strength-based approach to success. And so that luckily is easy to find. It's an easy sell when that's what you're saying you're promoting. So a lot of it's, yeah, like I said, local community businesses and agencies, the state and then campus is just a gold mine of partnerships.

Avery Martin:

Absolutely. And so how does this compliment your research?

James Graham :

Incredibly. And so a lot of the partnerships we have, and I think it's just a natural extension because the service side, people are inspired by that. But then clearly it's a R1 university. It's also, "What are you working on? What can we collaborate on?" So one project that I'm particularly excited about was just launched last month, so in partnership with Debbie Fiddler from the Department of Human Development Family Studies and Kelly Anns and Nathan Clark from the College of Agriculture. So we received funding from Larimer County, the workforce innovation grant program they had, and we were piloting an inclusive post-secondary education program, CSU for individuals and adults. But from the community they're interested in either agricultural or STEM careers. And so it just started and we've had really good tremendous support from the offices of admission and the registrar and the provost in getting this launched.

And so it's kind of dual. Clearly we have the research undermining to make sure and do program evaluation and to look at outcomes. But there's also just the service side and the opportunities for individuals. If you think about it from a personal perspective, meaningful employment is inarguably associated with independent social interactions and quality of life. And the reason we got the funding is because this project also kind of answers the state's call for competency-based non-degree credentials that they're trying to push which discussion from the day when you're a degree granting university.

But that's what this innovative funding was for. I've been trying to do it, we actually had it set up before. Have I mentioned the pandemic lately? Before the pandemic, we had donors and everything set up to launch it and all the way up to the president was like, "Yeah, let's do this." And then we had the planning meeting on March 3rd, 2020. But anyway, so it's back and we have full support and I just have extraordinarily high expectations for this project. But because I have an extraordinary team that I'm working with. So I think my expectations are justified. But it's collaboration. It's across university and then clearly with the county partners. And we're doing a lot of it at the RDEC, the research center, research farm just outside of town. It's a team effort.

Avery Martin:

For sure. That's great.

Matt Hickey:

You got a lot going on my friend.

James Graham :

Yeah, no, it's cool.

Matt Hickey:

That's a great platform for us to ask you to project over the next five years things you hope might bear fruit from these multiple collaborations that you've got going on.

James Graham :

Yeah. Sticking to that same one there as terms of the inclusive education thing, I hope that becomes a sustainable, exemplary program for what the benefits and what the actual return on diversity equity inclusion are. And so I can see that. And again, it'll be a fun research arena for me. But I can see that just being a viable program. There's hundreds of these across the country. I think it's actually kind of embarrassing that CSU hasn't done this before. So in terms of the other research projects, still all my PhD students and my postdocs are in the traditional health services research, still doing the medical rehab. And so just watching them [inaudible 00:25:41] their publications now, they're getting funded now, they're taking over committees that I started in our national organization. And I remember those milestones myself going through. But I love even more helping them and seeing them achieve those. So my role now is really just advising and mentoring is a riot.

Avery Martin:

Turned out to be a good mentor after all.

James Graham :

Too early to tell.

Matt Hickey:

Still working on it.

James Graham :

I'm trying.

Avery Martin:

Yes. Yes.

Matt Hickey:

You and I both fit into a different mode. Nobody would mistake us for early career investigators, right? So it seems to me at least in my own pathway that you start thinking a little bit more about things like legacy when you get to our stage of professional development, and I'm eager to hear your thoughts and seeds you hope you've planted that will continue to bear fruit long after you're retired.

James Graham :

Yeah. Probably like you, I don't really have time to think about legacy. But other academics, early in my career I focused on impact factor and citation count and H index and all those reflect kind of recognition by other researchers. And so a lot of the research cred is, they're largely web-based and they quantify the public's exposure to your work. And so things like views, downloads, shares, news links, blog mentions, or whatever that is. And now of course thanks to YouTube, I can add podcasts.

Avery Martin:

Yes, indeed.

James Graham :

Podcast one. And they are arguably better impact measures of what your work is doing. But they still don't reflect actual influence on policy or practice. And so I realize I'm kind of a broken record on policy or practice. But I still remember a keynote speech by, his name was Gerben DeJong. He was a giant in the field back when I was a wide-eyed postdoc. And he said, "The truth is evidence doesn't drive practice. Policy drives practice," exclamation point, paused for effect. And so just imagine my identity crisis. Here was a health services researcher trained in evidence-based practice and that's how you change everything, and thought I was contributing to the knowledge base. But it's true. Clearly evidence does matter when evidence should inform policy, it should be evidence-based policy. But it was kind of not necessarily a watershed moment, but an aha moment for me to think.

And so luckily in our stage, fast-forward several years and a few promotions later, is that I can now comfortably embrace the fact that my target audiences are patients or participants, family members, service providers, administrators and policy makers more so than other researchers. But again, it's stage specific in your career when you can afford to do that because promotion and tenure criteria haven't changed. So I'm actually quite proud when my team's work gets cited in government documents through the so-called gray literature. It doesn't add to our H index, but it is directly linked to policy.

And so I remember 14, 15 years ago when I first got an email from, it's called the Medicare Payment Advisory Commissioner, MPAC. And they wanted back then, now they can just get it, but, "Can you send us your recent article on," I can't remember, volume outcomes or something. "We want to include that in our report to congress." I was literally as a professional, I was like, "I have arrived." It's 2023 and I'm still waiting for rival. But to me that's impact and that's motivating. And so I'm trying to teach my trainees that. Try to get that too along the way, and you have to count those yourself. You have to kind of promote those yourself. But that to me is the payoff for our type of research.

Matt Hickey:

The metrics are always a funny thing and we tend to, one pops up and we all chase it like it's to the coolest thing since sliced bread. And I taught our grad methods class for years. I would always have them read a paper called the Natural Selection of Bad Science. [inaudible 00:29:37]. I'll send it to you. Yeah. It was a rather eye-opening critique of some of these metrics.

James Graham :

And back to an earlier question you had is one of the main reasons I was excited about coming to CSU was the opportunity to apply my HSR, my health services research to the community-based support services they were doing and because the staff would, again interviews and talking to people, they are literally providing life-changing services to individuals with disabilities. And so you don't have to be a PhD to recognize or appreciate those impacts. And so when I'm advising people on the academic path, you got to know the rules. But at the same time there are more important things that you can not wait as long as I did to start appreciating or highlighting.

Matt Hickey:

Sometimes when you're thinking about impact, you can leave the factor part of it out for a while, right?

James Graham :

Exactly. Yeah. So start with impact, factor will take care of itself. But it is. And it's difficult and it's clearly changed since I was climbing the ladder like that. Well, you were on the committee too. So I'm the chair of the promotion and tenure committee and so I'm on the college advisory committee for that. And it's how much money you bring in, how many publications, how many times you decided. But at the same time, "Let's see, what were your DEI initiatives?" and all these things that aren't counted and, "What was your impact?" And that's a burden for faculty to have to count and at the same time be more subjective or qualitative in their narratives. And so I've been impressed though with some of the innovation people have shown lately.

Matt Hickey:

Agreed. Well, let's talk a little bit about the college. We want to talk about this ecosystem in which we attempt to do what we are trying to do as academics and professionals. So talk to us about what you find the most appealing about being a scholar, teacher, mentor in the College of Health and Human Sciences.

James Graham :

Well, second now to this podcast series?

Matt Hickey:

Of course.

We'll pay you later. Check's in the mail.

James Graham :

I really do appreciate the diversity of disciplines and the talented people in the college who, we share the same vision, optimize the health, wellbeing and development of people and communities. I like that I add-on thing, especially when community partnerships is in our title. But it's interesting, especially promotion and tenure discussions on the annual college research day and stuff to see the different eight academic units. It really makes for an interesting and I think effective collage, if you will, of units that have that same focus. And the other thing I really like about this college in particular is, I don't even know how many there are, but there are several remarkable centers. And I remember when Lisa first became dean, she kind of called it, because I talked to her, I think she'd been a department chair and a center director earlier in career, but it was like... Because I was fairly new and seeing all these like, "Yeah. Can you introduce me to so-and-so?"

So she organized a centers director's meeting and so it was great to put places, faces with names and to learn more about the great service and research going on in there that's sometimes under the radar. So it was great. So we had all these plans monthly, I think it was monthly or quarterly or whatever. And then have I mentioned the pandemic? So that whole thing got just derailed. But now 2023, Lisa is interested in rekindling that because I just think that's a great think tank kind of environment for what's going on in the college and then what could we do? "What does it look like five years from now and 10 years from now?" like you asked me.

Matt Hickey:

Could be a nice little incubator, right?

James Graham :

Yeah, no, I think it's just a great collaborative environment. Trap us in a room, bring donuts. I think you'll get some good ideas out of it.

Avery Martin:

Absolutely.

Matt Hickey:

So the next layer up is this land grant institution, Colorado State University. So this strikes me as an easy question for you given how embedded you are in the community. You don't plant your flag on campus and roll down the shades and stare at your computer all day. So talk to us about what it means to you as a professional to work at a land grant institution.

James Graham :

Yeah. That is easy I think, and I think all of us kind of subscribe to that. I don't sit in my ivory tower like you do as much, but-

Matt Hickey:

Touche.

James Graham :

... it really is. And again, the name of our center, the Center for Community Partnerships, but even the research we do, it's real world research. So we don't do it in the lab and then go, "Why aren't you people doing this?" We're in there. I partner with Anschutz, the medical school down here. And I got collaborators at UNC. And I just think even the potential which I haven't taken, I've tried a few times but haven't taken advantage of. But extension, that's a no-brainer, in every county of the state. To me it's a great resource. And I think it's two way in terms of the opportunities to make an impact and make an impact that's meaningful to the people you're trying to impact.

And so yeah, again, small scale for me. I primarily stay in Larimer County with our kind of outreach. But just having that vast network is unique. And I think it's like you said, "What's next?" I think that is on the radar to try to make some of the stuff that we're doing here, "Why can't we do that at Pueblo or in the Eastern Plains?" And so I'll need to collaborate. But I think that's kind of a bucket list for me is to take more advantage of the land grant, both mission and scope than I have.

Matt Hickey:

Take advantage of our strength in numbers and geography.

James Graham :

Yeah. Exactly.

Matt Hickey:

Yeah. That's great. Well, that's a perfect spot I think to wrap things up. So on behalf of the college, I want to say thanks a ton for coming. We really enjoyed the-

Avery Martin:

Yes, greatly appreciate it.

Matt Hickey:

... chat. And I now have to retire back to my ivory tower of course.

James Graham :

I'm going to get out to the community and see what people need. Thanks a lot guys. That was very, very comfortable.

Avery Martin:

Great,

Matt Hickey:

Great. Another great interview is in the books. Thank you for listening to this episode of Health and Human Science Matters.

Avery Martin:

Stay tuned for the next episode. It's on the way. In the meantime, go listen to our episodes from seasons one, two, and three. And if you want to learn more about our CSU College of Health and Human Sciences, go to www.chhs.colostate.edu.