Former PE Teacher Finds Calling as School Counselor After Suffering Spinal Cord Injury

“During my student internship as a school counselor, one student came to me regularly. After building a rapport with him, he said he felt safe talking with me.”

Brad Smith, M.Ed. ‘13

Still wanted to work with kids after injury

After spending six years as a PE teacher in Ohio, I suffered a spinal cord injury. My wife and I moved to Atlanta in order for me to rehabilitate at the Shepherd Center. During this time, I realized I wanted to continue working with students. Since my background was in education, and school counseling had been a career I considered pursuing in the future, I decided to apply to graduate school and was accepted. I knew transitioning into this new role would still allow me to have a positive impact on students’ lives.

Program prepared me for the real world

Since I was a teacher, I knew what it was like to be in a school. But as a graduate student, there was so much work we had to do. I eventually realized that knowing how to do all that work would make my life easier because I would be able to adapt what I learned from the program to my job. Spending an entire academic year in a school, being mentored by the full-time counselor and working with students was invaluable because we experienced the entire process - from registration to graduation. The school counseling program definitely prepared me for the real world.

Goal is to build ASCA model program

One of the best aspects of Georgia State’s School Counseling program is that it’s designed around the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model framework in order to prepare its graduates to implement a high quality, comprehensive counseling program. It’s a hard goal to meet, but it’s a good one to strive for. I’m confident my training at Georgia State is helping me build a quality school counseling program, and be a well respected counselor to teachers, students and parents.