



September Student Spotlight: Flip Carswell, A Big Man on Campus

Submitted by Krista Brown, Special Education Teacher, Foothills Baldwin Site

In October 2020, a new student enrolled at Washington County High School (where I teach during the day) who was much like my other kids, except he was 6'7" tall and 240 pounds—but apparently not very athletic.

Although this young man—**Falenthia Carswell, but known to all as Flip**—was not very athletic, he was on the high school basketball team. Also at this time, my boyfriend, who played basketball at the University of Dayton, and I were in the beginning stages of creating our own non-profit that provides athletic training, character development, and academic support to at-risk kids in our little town. In January 2021, Flip, who was **TER-RIBLE** at basketball, began training with my boyfriend, and before long, he was at our house every night eating supper and working to get his grades up—he was also failing all subjects. Like many kids, Flip came from a single parent home. We were fortunate enough to be in a position to help provide Flip the additional support he needed.



Flip was a junior, and as his grades and basketball improved, we started talking to him about going to college. In April, I pulled up his transcript and saw that he had never taken a foreign language course. I believed that if he was offered a Division 1 scholarship, he would be unable to accept it without the required language credits. From my experience at Foothills, however, I knew there was a viable option for him to obtain his Spanish I credit over the summer and be able to take Spanish II during his senior year. I spoke with him, his mom, and **Susan Curtis, Baldwin site director**, and we began the enrollment process at Foothills.

Message from the Superintendent

You never know where success will come from. Our task at Foothills is to identify and break down whatever barriers present themselves along the way, so that our students can find success and begin their college and professional careers. Our mindset is that we have to be open to seeing those barriers, and to helping to set the paths for greatness.

Foothill was available at just the right time and in the right way for Flip. Some students have a full-time relationship with Foothills, while others, like Flip, are able to plug in and get just what they need to move on to greater things.

All of this is part of the unique Foothills model, and indeed what make our efforts so timely and important.—*Sherrie*

In This Issue

- Student Spotlight: Flip Carswell, Big Man on Campus
- Message from the Superintendent

Flip Carswell

A Big Man on Campus

Continued from page 1...

As in a lot of schools, this young man was viewed by many teachers and administrators as just another kid whose prospects were limited at best. I even talked to one of my administrators about him attending Foothills for Spanish and was interrupted because "he can just go to a junior college." However, when this young man became a football sensation, suddenly everyone wanted to jump on board and tried desperately to place him in a dual-enrollment Spanish class.



Even though he walked the halls of our little high school every day, many of these same people knew little about him as a student, much less as a person. Dual enrollment and college may have seemed like unlikely paths for him at this point. I knew Foothills was the best option for him to help bridge the gap, and in the summer of 2021, he earned the Spanish credit that he needed. That Spanish credit opened a door for him, and along with the support and belief he received from Foothills and Washington County staff, he developed the confidence to see college as a real possibility.

Throughout this time, while we were talking to him about going to college as a basketball player, we had NO IDEA that by the end of May, this young man, who had never played football in his life, would become one of the top football recruits in the country.

He literally went from being a kid whom few seemed to really know to his phone blowing up from some of the top college football coaches in the nation—including Nick Saban who personally called him one day while we were on our porch. Before long, we were in a whirlwind of driving all over the southeast to football camps and talking to coaches.

Flip finished his senior year on May 13th of this year, and by May 15th he was on a plane to Oxford. He is now at Ole Miss and will be wearing #51 on the football field this year (Hotty Toddy!). Although Flip's Foothills experience is not that of a typical Foothills student, he is very much like so many of the students we serve at Foothills.

I took Latin in high school many years ago, but I am in no position to teach Spanish. Had Foothills not been an option for him, I honestly don't know what would have happened, but I do know that he might not be at Ole Miss right now. Ole Miss has this "family" feel to it, and that's something he never had but that would be an ideal fit for him. Foothills is most definitely a part of his journey and his story, and I just wanted to share that with all of you.

Thanks so much **Dr. Gibney-Sherman** and all of the great leaders and staff at Foothills for what you do to give kids second, third, and fourth chances. Foothills is truly making a difference.



2415 Jefferson Road, Suite B
Athens, GA 30607
Mailing Address:
PO Box 7427
Athens, GA 30604
(706) 395-5932

The Foothills Vision

Foothills Education Charter High School strives to be an accessible, high-quality high school option that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the People of Georgia and its communities.