

**Perseverantia (S1, Bonus): “CATCHING UP WITH...Mike Grasela (‘13, Communications Media, Film/Video Production)”**

[ Bouncy *Catching Up With...* main theme pops in full volume ]

[ 00min 01sec ]

**Mike Grasela:**

And that's why we're on video, too, I think is to have that practical feature of like, oh, I worked on this, you know.

**Adam Fournier (host):**

You know, we we had that stereotype of, of college kids. You know, running off of ramen and because, you know, they don't have any money and –

**Mike Grasela:**

That's honestly like that's honestly true. But I ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for almost two straight years so I could save up enough money from my full time job to start my business. So I didn't eat ramen because I don't care for it. But peanut butter jellies are my jam on wheat, so there was that every single day.

But you save so much money. And before, you know, I saved up enough money to ax the old job and start working on what I wanted.

**Adam Fournier (host):**

Welcome to *Catching Up With...* where Fitchburg State students talk to Fitchburg State alumni, reflecting on their time here on campus, celebrating their accomplishments and discussing how they got from here to where they are now.

I'm Adam Fournier, and today's interview was conducted on April 29th, 2023, where I caught up with Mike Grasela, a 2013 graduate of the film and video program.

As a film major and editor myself, I was very excited to meet with Mike and talk about his experiences in the filmmaking world. We talk about his time here at Fitchburg State from developing his skills in the classroom to going on his internship and working in the filmmaking industry, being responsible for piecing together the final product as an editor, as well as designing its color scheme and visual style as a colorist.

We also discussed the possibility of pursuing a filmmaking career while staying in Massachusetts and how he started his own editing business based right in Boston – and the steps and sacrifices he had to take to get to where he is now.

[ 01min 35sec ]

**Adam Fournier (host):**

Thank you all for joining me, as I Catch Up With Mike Grasela.

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**Adam Fournier (host):**

Welcome. Thanks. Thanks for coming.

[ 01min 43sec ]

[ Bouncy *Catching Up With...* main theme fades out ]

**Mike Grasela:**

Thanks for having me.

**Adam Fournier (host):**

Yes. So if you just want to give a quick intro and where you're at, what you're doing these days.

**Mike Grasela:**

Yeah. So I went to Fitchburg State and graduated in 2013 from the Film and Video program. And nowadays – well, I got an internship at Hill Holiday, which was an ad agency in Boston working on Dunkin Donuts, Bank of America, Chili's. A lot of big, big players in the ad world. And got my start there as an editor and kind of moved up the world to colorist.

And after six years there, I started my own company as [Minutemen Post](#). And then two or three years later, I've merged with another Fitchburg State student to create [Post House 207](#), which is a play on – basically, we lived in Townhouse 207, which is right across from where we are now, and we changed it to Post House to kind of get a little bit better branding on editorial.

And that's where I'm at right now, is that's been going strong for two years right now it's post house.

[ 02min 40sec ]

**Adam Fournier (host):**

Awesome. That sounds like – it sounds exciting. Anything involving this I get really giddy as you can imagine.

**Mike Grasela:**

Oh yeah. Same here.

**Adam Fournier (host):**

Would you want to talk about any projects that you're working on currently because you said that your company is mainly in advertising. Are there any like notable projects that you worked on while either, you know, in your internship or like – while you have your business or any projects that you think feel like that's worth kind of mentioning?

**Mike Grasela:**

Yeah, some of the projects I can't talk about yet because of legal stances.

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**Adam Fournier (host):**

That’s fair enough. [ laughs ]

**Mike Grasela:**

But last summer I worked on a show for HBO called *Julia*, and I was the dailies colorist for that. So I worked through a third party vendor called Picture Shop. They’re a Color House that’s known for *Emily in Paris*, *The Walking Dead*.

They do a lot of good shows that you might see on TV or Netflix. But I got to experience firsthand, like, working in that field – because I was mostly in advertising up until that point. So I got to learn more about longform TV and stuff.

And it was a challenge, but I was really happy to get the opportunity to do it. And at the end of the day, I got to see the show, and I liked the show, actually. So that kind of also plays into it – because some times you work on things that you’re like, “I don’t care about any of that stuff,” but – and then, finally, when it came out, it was a, it was a huge relief to make sure that the show actually was really good! You know.

[ 04min 04sec ]

**Mike Grasela:**

And I think the biggest thing was for me, staying in Boston, you always have that weird itch of “Could I have gone to New York for an internship or LA with Fitchburg?” And, “Would I have been able to make it?” Right? And so with the L.A. team for this show, they called me back a few more times and I worked on several other shows with the team. So it kind of helped verify that if I did move out there, maybe I did have a good shot.

But I’m doing just fine in Boston, which is great. But it kind of also helped push that – like that itch a little bit further back in the back of my head – that I don’t need it anymore because I’ve kind of justified that I probably would be fine out there.

**Adam Fournier (host):**

It’s actually interesting that you bring up – one, being based in Boston and you know, the question or possibility of going out to L.A., which, first of all, I think it’s awesome that you’re just based out of Boston. I just think that filmmaking, becoming more prevalent and like filmmaking in Massachusetts, like it’s happening. Like it’s not just –

Mike Grasela:

It’s getting bigger.

[ 05min 02sec ]

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**Adam Fournier (host):**

Yeah, it's nuts. And that excites me so much. The reason why I bring that up is because every single time that I mentioned I go to film school to anybody, whether it's, you know, my family, my friends or people at work, I always get the question, “Oh, so you're going to move to L.A., right?”

**Mike Grasela:**

Right.

**Adam Fournier (host):**

But was that something that you kind of got a lot of? Like, “Oh, you're a filmmaker, you're going to go to L.A., you're going to go to Hollywood”? All that stuff.

**Mike Grasela:**

For me, it's it's Family First, right? And then job. So to move further away from my family just didn't make sense where for some of my friends, it was always L.A., it's always been L.A., and it will forever be L.A. So they came here because they were from Massachusetts, but once they moved out there, you'll never see them come back here.

They're like, you know, they like the warm weather or they just like the vibe out there. Same with the New York friends I have. Once they moved to New York, maybe they're not coming back to Massachusetts, but I mean, they're doing really well.

I guess that's the big thing. Right. And I think the biggest fear was not that I would go out to L.A. I think it was more plausible that I would move to New York more than L.A., just because I just like the speed of of New York City and basically all the offerings that the city has outside of video editing, but also how much they do have there. Right.

So like, you know, I really enjoyed the time there, but I really need to see how Boston is going to keep pushing because I've been doing so, so strong in Boston – and it's close to family and it's just like where I grew up, right?

So and especially with video really expanding further and further and coming to Boston, there's going to be more opportunities, especially with film stuff and TV shows and all across the board.

And I think that's the big thing is – it's making it a little bit easier to not have to live in those bigger markets like L.A. or New York and stuck in the grind like that. You can get stuck in the grind here instead.

*[ they laugh ]*

*[ 06min 58sec ]*

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**Adam Fournier (host):**

Yeah. One thing I kind of wanted to pick your brain about is, in terms of like doing this full time, how would you say, like, the work or like the work hours kind of differ. Is it much more sporadic? Is it just like unpredictable? And you kind of have to kind of go with the flow.

**Mike Grasela:**

I think for when I worked at a full time job that wasn't my own, it was a little bit more predictable, but it still was not your typical 9 to 5.

And I think, I always – when I talk to anybody looking into film and video – I remind them that film and video is not a 9 to 5 job. It you know, when I'm doing dailies, it's mostly starting at 9 p.m. So there have been days where I'd go into the office at 7 p.m. and see the sun out in the summer and come back and leave for the day. And the sun is still out, but it's 7 a.m., so I just missed the entire night.

So there are days like that. So those are a little bit more of a grind.

But even in the advertising world, if you're on a pitch, creatives like to change things last minute because they're trying to perfect that sale that they're going to make to whoever they're there pitching to.

And you'll start thinking, “Oh, I'm going to go home on a Friday at 5 o'clock.” And then you hear that there's a pitch coming and they're going to make you stay over the weekend.

And so it's – there are some times like that where you cringe a little bit, but it does pay off sometimes, especially, like, the dailies job. Like, I knew it was going to be a grind and it was – just it was – but it paid off, knowing that I made something that I could brag about, you know? A

And that's why we're all in video, too, I think is, is to have that braggable feature of like, “Oh, I worked on this.” You know?

*[ 08min 37sec ]*

**Adam Fournier (host):**

I guess the one thing that, you know, it's kind of hard not to mention in this, in this program in particular is the internship.

**Mike Grasela:**

Yeah. So I think that's the thing that also sold me to Fitchburg was seeing that long, long list. And especially if you walk down the hallways just like we were, you can see all the students have gone to these really notable places around the world, basically.

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And when you're an incoming student and you're looking around and you're seeing the long lists that Fitchburg has accumulated over time and the success that the interns have had after that, you just can't not fall in love with it. Right?

Like, I don't think everywhere has like spots that, like, – I think when I was looking it was MTV and there were places out in the West Coast that were really big like Ridley Scott and stuff like that. And so just like, “Oh, I could be that person that gets that chance. Why not go, go, go here, right?”

Like, I think so. Like that was a big selling point, right?

Like where if you go to anywhere else, they don't have those connections like Fitchburg does. So like, that's the big thing that got me my internship. And it was the Fitchburg student that had graduated three years ahead of me who was working full time at Hill Holiday. And he was, he knew that the bloodline of Fitchburg State is very, very strong, especially in Boston.

And so he basically pushed to his boss that, “Hey, I need to hire another intern from Fitchburg.” So my predecessor on that was another intern, Kevin Boyle, who ended up getting the job after his internship there. And so when it was my turn around, I was like, “Okay, so if I do a good job and I work just as hard as these interns did from Fitchburg, there might be a possibility I actually could get a job here.”

[ 10min 22sec ]

**Mike Grasela:**

I think a lot of times people think of internships as going to get coffee, and I did a little bit of that. But it was more like “Mike's going to go get lunch for everybody. But Mike also gets lunch too.” So I got to eat at some really nice restaurants and stuff, which is big, right? [ *laughs* ]

But when I was on internship, I think the first project I worked on was all hands on. I believe it was for Special Olympics, Massachusetts. And it was, it was a really awesome project. Just because you got to meet the athletes like one on one and kind of learn their stories and their abilities to basically crush, like, the competition that they face every day. So – and it was great because I also was just being an athlete. I got to connect with them on that end.

But they gave me a camera and said, “Let's go film it.” You know, it was a pro bono project for Hill, but it meant so much more because I got to prove what I could actually do. So I used the skills that I learned how to shoot. I got to learn how to interact a little bit more with with talent and stuff.

But I also knew how to go and cut something afterwards and how to offload it and get it on the computer and all that stuff. So that was a really big project in my eyes because I got to prove my worth to my future job, basically why they should hire me. But I get to show off my skills.

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And that was, that was really nice.

And and that's that's the best part about Fitchburg is that most of the students that you work with on projects, they go off to other things. But they remember you and they remember how good you were or like what you could help add to the team or the project. And they'll vouch for you because they're like, "That's a Fitchburg kid." They're not going to let me down. And that's the best thing about it.

[ 12min 03sec ]

**Adam Fournier (host):**

It's so funny that you mention that because one of the very first things that I was told when I first started here was like they mentioned that the Fitchburg State alumni, like, you know, they're everywhere. You know, they're in L.A., they're in New York.

So the fact that like now I'm hearing it, you know, not just from you, but from, you know, other students and some other grads that came and visited campus. They're saying, "Oh, yeah, I know the Fitchburg State Alumni Group." Like, it's real.

[ 12min 25sec ]

**Mike Grasela:**

Yeah, it's scary, too, because I don't know how many times I'll do a production or be a part of a production where someone else's name is brought up. I'm like, "Oh, that's a Fitchburg person. Oh, that's another Fitchburg person."

And before you know it, they're like, "What's in the water at Fitchburg that you guys are the most reliable coming in to these productions and we keep calling you back?"

And it's like there's a lot of teachers and professors. Each one of them is special in their own way. And I think I take what they taught me in the classroom ten years ago still seriously and and still use it in practice that I have today in video.

So whether it was Charlie telling me to use just the keyboard instead of the mouse and now I'm working faster and I'm now known in Boston as being a very, very fast, efficient editor. And I can only thank him for that one, for yelling at me, for being on my mouse too much.

But then you have Mary, who's helped me a tremendous amount with learning how to be a producer and having to produce work. I think the big thing here was that you got to touch every aspect of filmmaking, so you got to do the pre-production, you got to do post-production.

You did shooting, you did lighting, audio, you basically did all of it.

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And then you really got to hone in on what you felt more passionate about. And I think that's why I gravitated towards Charlie's class the most, because there's just like – this guy is basically giving his passion to me through his teaching. And I just could feel the love there in like how he wanted to mold.

And I was just like, “this, this is going to be what I want to do.”

And now that I own my own business, I've started trying to turn back the favor basically. And so I've had three interns so far coming through my, like, the program here at Minuteman and we've hired one of them so far.

So I was just, you know, and I think the big thing too, for me from the internship, what I know now when I have interns is I know exactly what they got here the four years.

*[ 14min 23sec ]*

**Mike Grasela:**

So when they say they're from Fitchburg, I know exactly how the teachers have been teaching them. So I know anecdotes that can basically touch base to say “hey, remember that class that Charlie talked about TimeCode and how important that was? Well, we're going to talk about TimeCode code and how important that is. And the like in this situation and and the low down, as you hopefully took notes in that class, I'm going to remind you about that class.”

**Adam Fournier (host):**

That kind of brings me to the next thing I want to, kind of wanted to talk more about is just you getting interns for your own business after being an intern yourself from the same program.

Like, that's got to be like, well, – that's got to hit close to home, that's just get to feel good just to give back.

*[ 15min 01sec ]*

**Mike Grasela:**

Yeah right. I mean I can't thank the professors in the school enough for how much they gave me. Right? They gave so much more than I think they know.

So my best way of giving back is through anything, right? So I just officiated at a track meet, so I try to help out with the track team as much as possible and also try to find track runners that are also video members. So then I can pull them into my world and stuff.

But I think, yeah, just giving back and being able to say “thank you.” And I was just like, let's this, this is the right way.



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So I reached out to Dr. Sides and I just reached out to him and said, “Hey, like, is there any way possible that I could bring in interns to my company? I know I'm not super big like Hill Holiday, but I know I can make sure I mold them the right way like I did when I was at Hill.”

And he was like, “That's a no brainer.”

Like, that's the big thing that – I think there's a lot of alumni that are out there that are hiring Fitchburg interns, but also bringing them on in internships first, but then hiring them afterwards because they just know how much the school's meant to them and how much.

I mean, it's just priceless, the education you get here.

So I think that's them feeling guilty a little bit about how much money we did pay to come here, but also like how do we give back to make sure that it still stays that special place?

You get every penny worth out of this education *if* you want it.

And it just goes from like the time that the teachers make for you. And after hours, the availability they have, when you send them an email, they get back to you really fast.

And I think you're almost in this position where you might, you probably should be paying them more money because of how much they put into it, because they want you to succeed just as much as, as they they care about everybody in the program.

So they, they're willing to give you that one on one time.

[ 17min 01sec ]

**Adam Fournier (host):**

One final thing that I kind of had for you, if you were to give any last minute advice to any of the students here, whether it's just specifically film/video student or just a college student in general – because, you know, God knows being a college student isn't the easiest thing on the planet.

**Mike Grasela:**

Right? Especially now.

**Adam Fournier (host):**

Oh, yeah. You're not, you're not kidding. I mean, you know, we have that stereotype of college kids, you know, running off of ramen because, you know, they don't have any money. But even more so now, I'm sure even ramen is like a luxury at this point. [ *laughs* ]

**Mike Grasela:**

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Well, I mean, that’s honestly – like living off of ramen? That’s, that’s honestly true. I ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for almost two straight years so I could save up enough money from my full time job to start my business.

So having that aspiration of what you want to do with what you can do and then how you can get there? Because for me, it was I wasn’t financially like anywhere in the chart, I was just surviving, right?

So I was like, “Wait, I want to do something different. I want to own my own business.” So I didn’t eat ramen because I don’t care for it. But peanut butter jelly are my jam on wheat. So it was that every single day. But you saved so much money. And before, you know, I saved up enough money to ax the old job and start working on what I wanted.

So the ramen thing that you learn in college, that’s very helpful depending on what you want with it. I don’t I don’t recommend eating it all the time, but definitely get the meal plan.

But, I think, the best advice or maybe learned advice that no one really tells you is – this is the four years that you get to really learn who you are and learn how to communicate with other people. So, with living on campus or being on a campus in general, you look back on, “Oh, that’s how I dealt with it. This is how I need to spearhead a problem in the real world too.”

Because you’re learning your critical thinking skills. But then also, like for me, I’m not a very social person. Like I said, I love being a cave dweller, but I think helping me grow my business, I needed to be a social person, right? So I needed to be more extroverted.

*[ 19min 19sec ]*

**Mike Grasela:**

And I think in college I learned how to go out and hang out with people that I don’t know and learn more about them and really sink into like where they’re from and stuff and, and really and really build some relationships that have lasted still to this day.

So I don’t know if that’s advice or whatever, but or me talking down like an old man? *[ laughs ]*

But yeah, I think it’s just “Go experience the early college life,” right? Like, go and enjoy being on campus, being with professors that want to share their passions with you – because it’s going to be the best four years you get and you get to be who you are. Where I feel like, in high school, you know, you kind of have to live into certain cliques and stuff.

But when I got to Fitchburg, I could be a whole new person. And that was huge for me. And I think that helped me learn more about myself, but also get me to where I am now.

*[ 20min 14sec ]*

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**Adam Fournier (host):**

So you heard it here. You know, for film and video students and college students it's bragging rights and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. That's how you do it. [ *laughs* ]

**Mike Grasela:**

Yeah, yeah. That's a good summary. I like that.

**Adam Fournier (host):**

But no, I think that's about all I got for you. So thank you very much for sitting down and just having this conversation with me. It's been, it's been awesome hearing about your experiences and just, like, to hear the fact that Fitchburg State is – it's awesome. [ *laughs* ]

**Mike Grasela:**

Yeah. And that's, that's not even saying the right word. Right? Like it's even better than awesome, I think. But definitely come drink the juice, right? Yeah.

**Adam Fournier (host):**

Come drink the juice, everybody. You heard it here. All right. But Mike, thanks again. This has been great.

[ Bouncy *Catching Up With....* main theme fades in ]

**Adam Fournier (host):**

And thank you, everyone, for listening. Once again, I'm Adam Fournier, and I've been catching up with Mike Grasela and we'll see you on the next one. Thanks.

[ Bouncy *Catching Up With....* main theme continues ]

**Adam Fournier (host):**

Thank you again for joining me. And thank you again, Mike, for taking the time to talk shop. And tell us about your time here at Fitchburg State and what life is like as an editor.

To learn more about Mike and his editing company, go to [MinutemenPost.com](http://MinutemenPost.com). That's [MinutemenPost.com](http://MinutemenPost.com) – post production at the ready.

[ Bouncy *Catching Up With....* main theme fades out ]

[ *Perseverantia theme music fades in* ]

**Bennett Jergensen:**

This is Bennett Jergensen, Fitchburg State University, class of 2026, I think. You're listening to Perseverantia, the Fitchburg State Podcast Network.

[ *Perseverantia theme music fades out* ]