John Castro: No matter what happens, there will be other opportunities, and you don't know what's going to happen until you apply. You really don't. You might think you're unqualified for something, and then they give you the job, because they think you're qualified for it. You don't know anything until you try. The worst they can say is no, and then there's like 10 more you can apply to, that may also say no, but then there's 10 more you can apply to. There's always opportunities, and you should take them. There's no point not taking them or at least trying to.

Justice Curry: Hello everyone. My name is Justice Curry, and I'm a junior in the P2W major. Joining me today for our first episode is a special friend of mine, John Castro. He is a senior in P2W, and is graduating this May. The first thing I want to ask you John, is why P2W?

John Castro: Well, I was kind of having an identity crisis for a really long time, where I wanted to pursue writing, but I also didn't want to live in my mother's attic for the rest of my life. So I had to find a happy medium. I was like, "What field can I go into that allows me to use my talents, but also make money?" And at first I thought English, English is fine. People don't usually like English majors, but I'm going to be an English major. And then it just didn't work for me. I didn't like it. It wasn't satisfying. And then I went to my advising office and they suggested professional writing, and I was like, "All right, I'll give that a go."

Justice Curry: Do you think you made the right decision switching from English to P2W?

John Castro: Oh absolutely. 100%. I can't see it any other way now.

Justice Curry: Well, I'm so happy that you took that chance and made that switch. That's definitely a tough call to make, and it all worked out. Speaking of that switch, what is your area of focus in P2W?

John Castro: I'm in advanced web authoring, which is the coding track, so digital media. I know a lot of my classmates chose editing and publishing, but I was like, "I want to learn how to code." And now I'm regretting not taking editing and publishing, because now I'm in The Current, the magazine class, and I've never edited before. So I guess that would be one of my only regrets with what I've chosen, is because I don't really think I'll be able to apply my coding skills to what I want to do.

Justice Curry: Definitely. Yeah. A lot of people choose the editing and publishing track, that's the track that I kind of decided to go down. But I've never met anyone who's chosen the digital media track as a focus, so what are your goals in digital media?

John Castro: Right now I've applied to a lot of communications jobs, doing social media and making flyers and stuff with the Adobe suite. That's kind of what I want to focus, on while also getting to write copy and write creatively at the same time.

Justice Curry: Wow. So you want to do a lot of cool things. I appreciate that. I'm curious to know what classes and experiences have you had at WRAC that you feel brought you closer to your goal?

John Castro: Obviously, both of the coding classes I feel are important, but more so I think taking the publication management class with Kate Birdsall in particular. I really like how she teaches it. Another class that I feel is almost essential is the class that we took together, the Writing in Multimodality. Because you learn how to do social media campaigns, you learn the podcasting and stuff, so I think just being able to learn how to manipulate those different media forms is important for what I want to do.

Justice Curry: Yes, we took WRA 325 with Alex Hidalgo and it was so much fun. It was honestly one of my favorite classes I've ever taken, because we learned so much about social media campaigns, blog posts, and podcasts, and we got to collaborate a lot. And while it was work, it wasn't something that I dreaded doing. So I highly recommend that if you haven't taken that class, that you check it out, it's really fun.

Justice Curry: Switching gears a little bit, I'm curious to know, what was your experience when you began your P2W journey? Were you nervous? Did you feel lost?

John Castro: I think the first question is what am I doing? I felt like it was such a rash decision, that I didn't really research it too much, I didn't really know what I was getting myself into, I just kind of knew the basics that made me want to choose it. I also was very confused as to how things like exams, tests, textbooks, how that was going to work because going into it, it was all different. You didn't have to pay $200 for textbooks, you didn't have to take exams at the end of the semester. I was confused. And I was just worried that I wouldn't be able to find people that I liked in this major, because I had this preconception that it wasn't a creative major as opposed to Creative Writing and English, because in my mind, that's where all the creatives were. So I was just worried about what I was going to get myself into.

Justice Curry: So throughout that very stressful time, how did you find your way?

John Castro: I think you just have to do it. You really just have to throw yourself into it and see what happens. And eventually you adjust and it kind of fits into a groove, and you grow used to the program and you kind of find your own way. I feel like I was able to grow as a writer through the program, but that wasn't until after I decided to stop being worried about what was going to happen in the future was when I was able to actually let myself learn and grow.

Justice Curry: Wow. That is such a powerful statement. We really are the only thing holding us back sometimes, and that's beautiful that you were able to get past that and prosper in the end. So I'm curious to know, was there anything that you wish you knew about P2W before you made that switch?

John Castro: I wish I would have known how project-heavy the major is, and how strange the atmosphere feels sometimes. To me it feels more like a workplace atmosphere than a classroom atmosphere sometimes. So I kind of wish I’d known that it was going to be a different mindset than what I was used to.

Justice Curry: That's a very good point. It's not something I thought about when I made the switch to P2W, so I'm happy you brought it up. Switching gears a little bit again, let's talk about anxiety and networking. We all know that networking is really important in our field, and honestly, in any field, so what advice would you have for networking within the department and within your classes for people that struggle with anxiety, like myself?

John Castro: Yeah. I totally relate to that anxiety-stricken mindset when you need to make friends and you need to network. For me, I feel like I needed to learn what types of people I was comfortable being around. And knowing that allowed me to kind of look around the room and see who was going to be my friend, who am I going to click with the most? And then once you find those one or two people, then they introduce you to their friends, and then you get more comfortable.

John Castro: So for me, it's kind of a strategy. I strategically pick who I'm going to vibe with, and then I just kind of let that take care of itself and let it grow on its own until I know half the people in the room. And it also requires a bit of courage, it requires some gusto, it requires you to actually go out and make the effort to meet new people, which is very difficult, but it's a first step that everyone has to take. And I don't know how to make it easier, I don't know what to say to make it easier. It's just one of those bandaid moments that you need to rip off.

Justice Curry: I appreciate your honesty, John. It definitely takes some courage to be able to network and make friends, but the classroom is the safest place to start, so now is the best time to get into the habit.

Justice Curry: So now we're going to get into talking about internships, which is something I'm sure all of us are really curious about in the WRAC department as students. So what is your internship experience, John? How many have you had so far, if you have had any?

John Castro: I have had two internships.

Justice Curry: That's really awesome that you were able to get those experiences. And so I'm very curious to know, what did you, what did you learn during your internship process? What were some of the things that you dealt with? What was your internship experience?

John Castro: The internship taught me how to connect with really important people, how to send out professional emails, how to create good graphics, how to track analytics for social networks. It felt like real work, and I did not like and liked it at the same time, that fact, mostly because I'd never done it before and I was terrified, and all of these people were much older than me, I was very young, but I feel like if I didn't have that experience, I'd be lacking in a lot of skills.

Justice Curry: Well, that's amazing and I'm really happy for you that you were able to get that experience. That's really awesome, John. I'm also curious to know, how did you find these internships?

John Castro: I used Handshake to get both of the positions I believe, which is really nice. If you take advantage of that resource, it can really be beneficial for finding work.

Justice Curry: Yeah. I totally forgot about Handshake. I honestly haven't visited it since freshman year when I was a business student and we were required to have a Handshake. So just a reminder to you MSU students, like don't forget to utilize your sources, your resources for finding jobs and finding internships. That's awesome.

John Castro: Another thing that I'd probably say is that when applying for jobs and when interviewing, you need to act like you know what you're doing. In the interview process you can't show... Okay, I'll take that back. There are ways that you can say that you're still learning, and that could be beneficial to you, but being down on yourself because you don't know how to do something without trying is not something I would advise anyone doing. I feel like you should have more confidence in yourself than you think you do, and when you apply to jobs, you need to express that confidence.

Justice Curry: That's very well said, and it's good advice to remember as someone that struggles with anxiety too, to just try not to overthink it and just go in there being as confident as possible and just acting like you know what you're doing. I really appreciate you saying that, John.

Justice Curry: To close out I want to end on a note where you just give us some advice, as people and students, that just struggle sometimes. When you were going through it, what gave you the motivation, the courage to just push yourself and keep going? What gave you that motivation? How did you motivate yourself?

John Castro: To me it was an ultimatum. It was like, if you don't move on, you move back, or you stay stagnant, and you'll be stuck in the same place. I just have to remind myself that there's stuff on the line. My future is on the line, and I need to kick it into high gear. Especially if I'm feeling down on myself, I know that I need to up my game or else I'm not going to go nowhere. I need to step on the gas pedal, I need to move, I need to grind. And to grind I need to realize my limits. I need to know, "I'm going to take a break, chill out, watch some YouTube, hang out with my boyfriend." And then I need to do homework for three hours nonstop.

John Castro: I feel like you need to know your limits. You need to know how much is too much before you overheat, and what that balance is for you. Because for me, I was on antidepressants for a bit, because I was depressed. But even though I was on them, I wasn't completely happy, because I didn't know how much was too much. I didn't know how to self regulate or control my emotions. I was just kind of throwing stuff at the wall and hoping that I finish an assignment, or hope that I get through the next day. So I think you need to really look at yourself and look at how much you're able to handle, and how to control or give yourself time to process emotions, and how to execute that properly so that you don't fail.

Justice Curry: That's really good advice, honestly. And I think it's something that's really useful for everyone as students, and just when you're going through some stressful times. So just to close it out, is there anything else you want to say to the P2W people out there, to the WRAC people out there, just to close out this whole episode?

John Castro: It's a fun time, have fun. It's really not that scary. It does feel like a workspace a lot of the time, but you meet some really cool people. There's some really cool people in this program.

Justice Curry: And there you have it folks. That was John Castro, just having a conversation with me and just giving us some advice, giving us some knowledge about all of those people that are curious about P2W, or those that are new to P2W, and just those in the WRAC department. So I hope you guys have a great time, I hope you enjoyed this first episode. Please send me suggestions for what you want to hear in the next upcoming episodes, do you want to hear from freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors? I know personally as a junior, I want to hear a lot from seniors about their experiences about what's important stuff too. So yeah, thank you for joining me with the first episode of A Chat With WRAC.