

Audio Clip from Grace Chen

In this clip, Grace talks about a conversation she had with former students who were attending UNC-Chapel Hill. In this conversation, her students explained the challenges and difficulties they were experiencing at college, and were upset about the ways that their high school education had not prepared them for these challenges. At one point, the students told Grace that they felt that their teachers in high school “lied” to them about college.

It's really, pretty upsetting and heartbreaking and frustrating to hear some of the challenges that they [my students] were going through. They were used to being the top students at KIPP. They were used to working really hard and being really successful. And now that they got to college and were in a much more competitive environment, it suddenly felt like it wasn't enough.

I had a student tell me that she felt like her professors didn't care about her and didn't want her to be there, and didn't want to help her even at office hours. She said she had a professor directly tell her that “Carolina Covenant* students always failed my class, so you shouldn't be too surprised.”

My students are from a very rural community. The town where our school was had only 792 people in it, but our students came from seven different counties and all over. And so for many of them, going to Chapel Hill and going to UNC was a pretty big culture shock. And I think they found it pretty surprising and really unexpected that it wasn't as friendly an environment as they had hoped. Instead of being sort of supported the way they were used to be supported in high school, they felt like they were alone and lost. And only sort of had each other who understood the backgrounds that were from, and who understood how tough it was to be going through what they were going through.

**Carolina Covenant is a program at UNC-Chapel Hill that guarantees admission to the university for low-income students who graduate at the top of their high school class. The program also connects students to financial aid and work study programs that cover all their expenses and allow these students to graduate debt-free.*