

***AcademiCast* Transcript**
Texas Tech University
December 7, 2011

Johnson: Hello and welcome to *AcademiCast* – Texas Tech University’s biweekly podcast series from the Office of the Provost. I’m Sarah Johnson, and I’ll be covering the top academic stories on campus. Later in the program, Provost Bob Smith will spotlight Integrated Scholar Laura Beard, a professor of Spanish and chair of the Department of Classical and Modern Languages and Literatures.

And now, the news...

Texas Tech announced that it has named an internationally renowned scientist as the head of its Neuroimaging Institute. Professor Yi-Yuan Tang took over as the institute’s director earlier this semester. He will begin working there full time in the spring.

Tang: “The neuroimaging institute is essential to Texas Tech and is a major investment of the university. The institute will help us to build our strength in neuroscience, psychology, engineering, education, health care, and biology. And it will become one of the best in the country and the world.”

Johnson: Tang intends to raise the institute’s presence worldwide by building an exceptional team. He is bringing together faculty from Texas Tech and the Health Sciences Center to ensure an alliance across disciplines. The Texas Tech Neuroimaging Institute, also called T-T-N-I, opened in the spring of 2011. The institute offers an assortment of brain- and body-imaging technologies for faculty and graduate student research.

Texas Tech’s alternative admissions program reports success in preparing students to enter the university. The Tech Transfer Acceleration Program, also called T-TAP, is a partnership between Texas Tech and South Plains College. The semester-long program allows students who were initially denied admission to Texas Tech to learn about the demands of college life. Students live on campus and attend classes taught by South Plains faculty. If students maintain minimum GPA and credit hour requirements during the fall semester, they will be accepted by Texas Tech and allowed to enroll in classes in the spring.

The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources is rolling out a doctoral degree program in agricultural communications and education. The degree program launches in the spring. It aims to prepare students for roles in academia amid high demand for faculty in the areas of agricultural education, communications, leadership

and extension. The college's Department of Agricultural Education and Communications is nationally recognized, ranking as one of the Top 10 programs in the U.S.

Laura Beard is a professor of Spanish, & she chairs the Department of Classical & Modern Languages and Literatures in the College of Arts & Sciences. Her teaching, research & service have earned her distinction as an Integrated Scholar. Provost Bob Smith recognizes her efforts here.

Smith: Born in Alaska, Professor Laura Beard has always been intrigued by different cultures & their connections to literature. Her interests took root when she was very young. Growing up, Professor Beard lived in & visited different parts of the United States. She also had some opportunities to travel abroad.

Beard: I've always been interested in literatures and cultures. I've been an avid reader since I was a child. I think I've always been a reader and always been interested in books and I've always been interested in different cultures. I had some opportunities to travel out of the United States, a little bit, growing up. I started Spanish when I was young and was able to travel to Spain for the first time in junior high school.

Smith: Professor Beard's interests continued to bloom when she went to college.

Beard: When I was in college, I was able to study abroad twice. I studied in Spain my sophomore year in college & then in London my senior year in college. So then I went on to graduate school, so, to do a degree in literature.

Smith: Professor Beard earned a bachelor's degree in English literature from Carleton College in Minnesota. She then earned a master's and a doctorate in Hispanic studies from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Professor Beard began teaching at Texas Tech in 1995.

Beard: I teach a lot of graduate courses in contemporary Latin American literature and Latin American women writers and courses in that area and then I used to teach a lot of courses in comparative literature in years past which I enjoy very much 'cause I enjoy the sort of opportunity in comparative literature to allow student to bring different kinds of things together and look at things in new ways. I've taught, you know, at the undergraduate level over the years here, because I've been here a long time, I've taught the gambit from first year Spanish classes up through fourth year courses.

Smith: Outside the classroom, Professor Beard also focuses her research on the literatures & cultures of North & South America.

Beard: In South America, I work mostly in Spanish-American & Brazilian literature, so I do both Spanish & Portuguese. And in North America, I work primarily in the indigenous

literatures & cultures of North America. ... I work mostly in contemporary stuff. ... I work primarily with women writers. I work a lot in autobiographical genres in different kinds of life narratives, but all sorts of narratives. So, I work in novels & short stories & autobiographical narratives. I'm interested in matters of identity: issues of personal, cultural, ethnic & sexual identity. All sorts of things of how people define their lives & write their stories.

Smith: Professor Beard has been awarded grants from the U.S. Fulbright Commission, Newberry Library & National Endowment for the Humanities. These awards have helped to further her research & led to the publication of many notable works. Professor Beard's book "Acts of Narrative Resistance: Women's Autobiographical Writings in the Americas" won the Texas Tech President's Book Award in 2011.

Beard: That's a book that looks at works written by women in the Americas. So, there's works there by women in Argentina, Brazil & Canada, women from different nations, different cultures, different tribal nations in Canada, & how those women use autobiographical writings to, in some ways, to explore their own identities, to explore identities within their cultures. In many cases, these are women who are not from the dominant culture of their nation & so they're writing against certain dominant narratives & inscribing their own sorts of identities. And so these are acts of narrative resistance, they're resisting the dominant narratives of their cultures. I'm very interested in that kind of writing & I'm interested in how literature can function politically within a culture. Both how it can function for the person writing, but how it might function for people who read those texts & how it can be empowering in different ways.

Smith: Supplementing her scholarly pursuits, Professor Beard has been involved in a number of outreach efforts at Texas Tech.

Beard: I think, here at Tech, some of the things I've done that I've enjoyed working on a lot have been things related to issues of diversity. I worked as faculty liaison for the cross-cultural academic achievement center & doing a number of projects related to advocating for diversity on campus & advocating for connecting the goals of diversity & equity & engagement with the classroom & with other units on campus that I think can be natural allies for that. I'm an active member of the teaching academy & I do a lot of work with our teaching learning technology center, which is a wonderful & amazing resource here on campus & I love doing anything there. I've been active in the TEACH program & working with graduate students & mentoring graduate students there in the TEACH program. ... And then also I'm currently now the president of Phi Beta Kappa on campus & so the work I do in that is great. It's another thing that I love.

Smith: Professor Beard believes that it is important for faculty to complement their teaching & research with service projects that they find meaningful. Also, she suggests a heightened priority consciousness.

Beard: Choose the things that you know are important to you & that you know you can be passionate about, that you're gonna love doing because if you bring your passion to those things then you'll enjoy it, but you'll also do a much better job at it. ... I'm passionate about teaching, so all of things related to teaching & the TLTC. I'm passionate about diversity issues. I'm passionate about advocating for the liberal arts & humanities & the things related to Phi Beta Kappa. ... The things that I do I do because they are so important to me & that makes me a good advocate for those issues. ... So, pick wisely what you want to do, but just follow your heart because that's going to lead you the best place I think.

Smith: That is wise advice from Professor Beard. All of her life she has followed her own heart -- and it has inspired her travels beyond the US and into a career she is passionate about. In turn, through her teaching, research & outreach, Professor Beard has influenced others to pursue interests that are truly important to them.

Thanks for listening! I'm Bob Smith.

Johnson: Thanks, Dr. Smith!

You can learn more about Professor Beard and other Integrated Scholars by visiting our website at **academicast.ttu.edu**.

And finally, *AcademiCast* would like to recognize Rawls College of Business professor Debra Laverie and doctoral student William Humphrey for earning the Top Academic of the Year Award from the Mobile Marketing Association. Laverie and Humphrey explored mobile marketing through their work, titled "Brand Community and Location Service, Social & Mobile Research."

That concludes this edition of *AcademiCast*. Thanks for listening and join us again in two more weeks for the latest academic news from Texas Tech University. See you next time!