

AcademiCast Transcript
Texas Tech University
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Pierce: This is AcademiCast—Texas Tech University’s podcast series from the Office of the Provost. I’m Rachel Pierce, and I’ll be covering the top academic and research stories on campus. Later in the program, Provost Bob Smith will spotlight Integrated Scholar Audra Morse. First, the news...

Red Raiders have been celebrating their academic accomplishments. More than 2,600 students graduated this semester. Attendees to the university’s five commencement ceremonies were treated to special guest speakers, including Texas Tech System Chancellor Kent Hance, US Secretary of Navy Ray Mabus, and American Association for Justice president Mary Alice McLarty.

The university is aiming to attract more top-tier graduate students, thanks to a \$12 million gift from the Talkington Foundation. An endowment in the name of the foundation will help support about 130 graduate fellows each year, and the university is eligible to receive matching funds from the state. In commemoration of the gift, the residence hall on Boston Avenue was named the J.T. and Margaret Talkington Hall.

In research news, the National Science Foundation is rolling out changes to its funding process. The way in which researchers must prepare and submit their proposals will be modified starting January 14th. To help explain the changes, the Office of Research Services has prepared a series of training videos and is conducting a series of information sessions. To learn more about this story, visit our website at academicast.ttu.edu.

Integrated Scholars dedicate themselves to a course of lifelong learning. Their emphasis on teaching, research and service helps to promote scholarly engagement. And in doing so, Integrated Scholars advance Texas Tech’s role in educating, serving and inspiring others to pursue a path of lifelong learning. In this edition of AcademiCast, Provost Bob Smith spotlights Integrated Scholar Audra Morse.

Smith: Engineering professor Audra Morse is a Red Raider through and through. Originally from Houston, Morse earned her bachelor’s, master’s & doctoral degrees in environmental & civil engineering from Texas Tech. She remained at her alma mater to build a career in academia, which has allowed her to integrate her teaching, research & service activities. Morse says her interest in integrated scholarship took root when she was an undergraduate, & her role model was & continues to be Texas Tech civil engineering professor Heyward Ramsey.

Morse: When it comes to especially teaching, my inspiration is Dr. Heyward Ramsey. He was a faculty member in this department. He was my colleague. He was my friend. And

he was one of the first professors that I had at Tech. And he really role-modeled some very important things. And it was to be a lifelong learner and to be passionate about your subject and to want to share that with others. When I think about what it means to be a professor, he role-modeled all that.

Smith: Morse is first & foremost dedicated to serving her students. She strives to ignite her students' interests in the classroom & the laboratory—much in the same way that Professor Ramsey triggered her fascination with the field of environmental engineering.

Morse: I love the students. They are so much fun. Every time I teach a class, and it doesn't matter how many times I've taught that class, I learn more about myself, I learn more about the material, and I learn more about my students. It's just such a wonderful experience. And then when you can inspire them the way that you were once inspired—like I mentioned Heyward Ramsey previously—if I can do what he did for my students, then I know I've done the right thing. They are my favorite part of this job.

Smith: This past year, Morse taught a service-learning course for the first time, with the focus being wastewater reuse for industrial applications. The class's curriculum was an extension of her research, which focuses on the treatment & reuse of wastewater. Morse explains that she is driven by her work in environmental engineering, & she believes that the efforts undertaken by Texas Tech researchers to ensure safe drinking water can make a lasting impact on society.

Morse: So we have to be mindful about where our water comes from, how we use it, and then how we reuse it. And so all of these technologies, and all the things that I do come back to that issue of how do we protect our water that we really need to support our day-to-day life. The good news is I feel that—my research and the research of my colleagues—that we're doing that. We're protecting it. We're looking at how to keep it and reuse it, so it's always available for future generations.

Smith: Morse also devotes her time to guide future generations of engineers. She has served as faculty adviser to the American Society of Civil Engineers at Texas Tech & participated in activities such as Women in Science & Engineering & the summer young person's camp, Shake Hands with Your Future. Although she balances a busy schedule & numerous commitments, Morse has been able to meet her accomplishments by maintaining a sensible mindset.

Morse: My first thought is to never take yourself too seriously and then just know that you can't be perfect. So I adopted a hero many years ago, and that's Mary Poppins. It's really true. I joke about her in class. I can say “supercalifragilisticexpialidocious” backwards. But she's only practically perfect. And that's part of not taking yourself too seriously. Because if you expect yourself to be perfect and take yourself too seriously and when things don't go quite right, then you will be embarrassed or that can be

frustrating and then you spiral downward, so just embrace your imperfections, be practically perfect like Mary Poppins, and I think that helps make things go a lot better.

Smith: British writer and philosopher, Arthur Koestler (1905-1983), wrote (in *The Act of Creation* [Macmillan, 1964]): “The principal mark of genius is not perfection but originality, the opening of new frontiers.” Professor Morse understands this aphorism & has earned the distinction of being named an Integrated Scholar because of her fusion of teaching, research & service—all in an effort to engage engineering students. She continues to reach out to students through her recent appointment as associate dean of undergraduate studies in the Whitacre College of Engineering. As an administrator, Morse is helping to revise the engineering curriculum for freshmen, to promote study abroad opportunities & to strengthen interest in the field of engineering, particularly for young women. For all of this, AcademiCast applauds Integrated Scholar Audra Morse. Thanks for listening! I’m Bob Smith.

Pierce: Thanks, Dr. Smith! That concludes this edition of AcademiCast. If you would like to learn more about the stories featured here, please visit our website at academicast.ttu.edu. Join us again next semester as we spotlight the top academic and research news from Texas Tech University, as well as profile Integrated Scholar Zenaida Aguirre-Munoz.