

**AcademiCast Transcript**  
**Texas Tech University**  
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Pierce: Welcome to AcademiCast—Texas Tech University's biweekly podcast series from the Office of the Provost. I'm Rachel Pierce, and I'll be covering the top academic stories on campus. Later in the program, Provost Bob Smith will spotlight student of integrated scholarship John Duff.

First, the news...

This summer Texas Tech is hosting an array of academic enrichment programs. One such program is called Science: It's a Girl Thing. The program provides hands-on experiences that aim to strengthen girls' scientific interests. Chemistry professor Dominick Casadonte is one of many faculty members collaborating with the program.

Casadonte: Science: It's a Girl Thing is really a program that's designed to stimulate interest in the sciences among a wide range of young ladies, from roughly age 9 to 14 or 15, maybe even as old as 16. There are a variety of different science areas that a girl can choose to go into, so for example, chemistry, wind energy, biology, medicine. So it gives the girls a real for what it's like to be in a laboratory setting and do some science.

Pierce: Professor Casadonte says both he and the students benefit greatly from Science: It's a Girl Thing.

Casadonte: I love going into demo shows for Science: It's a Girl Thing because the girls are so enthusiastic. If I ask for a volunteer during the demonstrations, almost 100 percent of the hands will go up. I mean, they just love science; they love everything that they're learning, but they really love science. And so it's kind of neat to have an enthusiastic audience, so I really like doing this a lot. And I hope that by giving them a little bit of science education while having fun at the same time, maybe they'll think of science in a positive way and they'll think about it as a fun activity that they may want to carry on later on in life. I've had a number of students who have been in my freshman general chemistry class who have come up. The first day of class they told me that they were involved with Science: It's a Girl Thing eight or so years earlier in their life, and it's really very edifying to see that when it happens. And a lot of our folks who then continue on and become, say, HHMI scholars or undergraduate research fellows or in the Honors College will often cite Science: It's a Girl Thing as one of the experiences when they were younger that really stimulated their interests in the sciences.

Pierce: Science: It's a Girl Thing is a four-day program open to girls in the fifth through eleventh grades. To learn more about it and other summer programs offered at Texas Tech, please visit our website at [academicast.ttu.edu](http://academicast.ttu.edu).

In other news, the Rawls College of Business names Lance Nail as its dean. Nail comes to Texas Tech from the University of Southern Mississippi. At Southern Miss, Nail served as dean of the college of business since 2008. Nail succeeds Allen McInnes, who was dean of the Rawls College of Business for 10 years.

The director of the Texas Tech Neuroimaging Institute says practicing meditation can have a significant affect on the brain. Professor Yi-Yuan Tang and his research partner found that just one month of practicing Chinese mindfulness meditation led to positive mood changes and improved connections in the brain. Findings from the research will appear in the online edition of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Along with a commitment to academics, Students of Integrated Scholarship pursue a course of lifelong study through their involvement in active learning experiences. Modes of active learning include internships, service learning, undergraduate and graduate research, and opportunities to study abroad. In this edition of AcademiCast, Provost Bob Smith spotlights agribusiness student John Duff.

Smith: For Levelland native John Duff, agriculture has been key to both professional and personal endeavors. Since his father is a farmer, Duff felt that his decision to pursue a degree in agribusiness was a natural one. Indeed, his interest in agriculture has allowed him to excel academically and to apply his knowledge through several internships, including public service opportunities with Congressman Neugebauer and Congressman Brady, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the agricultural firm of Combest, Sell and Associates. This past year, he has been involved with National Sorghum Producers.

Duff: I've been very blessed professionally. The last two years of college, I've had jobs that were related to my career. I've had five internships counting my job now. I've been an intern since August with National Sorghum Producers. We do a lot of policy analysis and spreadsheets and do some statistical analysis on our policy models that we build. We do a lot of work around the Farm Bill and help National Sorghum Producers formulate their policy positions on specific pieces of legislation.

Smith: Outside of the classroom, Duff has also been involved with the South Plains Food Bank's organic farming program.

Duff: The South Plains Food Bank Farm operates an organic farm on the South Loop. At-risk and disadvantaged children from surroundings come and they volunteer on Saturday mornings during the school year, and they vie for paid summer positions. It's a great program. It teaches them life skills, and it teaches them about agriculture.

Smith: Looking ahead, Duff says he'd like to stay involved in agriculture so he can advocate on behalf of farmers across the country.

Duff: If that means that I must run a trade association one day, or if that means I must run for Congress one day, I'm not sure yet. But, either of those roles are, I think, great roles, and if I can help the American farmer there, and benefit the American people through advancing agriculture, I think it's great.

Smith: Duff recommends that other students should not only strive for academic excellence but also pursue active learning experiences if they aim to become integrated scholars. While he admits that competition for opportunities has its drawbacks, Duff believes his hard work has been met with success—several times over.

Duff: Always try to go above and beyond. Always try to do a little more than the guy beside you is doing, and that may be a bad view to take, as far as competition goes, if you're always trying to best the guy beside you, but that's the approach I took. If the guy beside me is going to make an 88 in a class, I want to make a 90, or if the guy beside me is going to make a 95 in the class, I want to make a 100 in the class. And I tried to take that approach with internships, with academics, with service, and it's worked out very well for me.

Smith: About ten years ago, I met opera impresario and conductor, Sarah Caldwell, who was active in her craft well into her late seventies. Her advice to integrated scholars was this, "Learn everything you can, anytime you can, from anyone you can; there will always come a time when you will be grateful you did." By underscoring his commitment to learning—whether it be in the classroom or away from the university's campus—John Duff has attained the valuable experiences of a student of integrated scholarship. His dedication to work on behalf of the American farmer attests to his dedication to agriculture, a vital field in today's society and a field absolutely critical to our planet with its burgeoning population.

Thanks for listening! I'm Bob Smith.

Pierce: Thanks, Dr. Smith! If you would like to learn more about Texas Tech's Students of Integrated Scholarship, please visit our website at **[academicast.ttu.edu](http://academicast.ttu.edu)**.

Finally, AcademiCast would like to recognize Katy Henderson and Brandt Schneider for their awards from the West Texas Association for Women in Science. Henderson serves as an assistant vice president for research at Texas Tech. She received the Outstanding Woman Leader Award for her support of faculty members' academic pursuits. Schneider is a professor of biology and biochemistry at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center. He received the Champion of Women Award for providing equal opportunities for women to work in his laboratory.

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](http://academicast.ttu.edu)**. Thanks for listening, and join us again in two more weeks for the latest academic news from Texas Tech University.