

**AcademiCast Transcript**  
**Texas Tech University**  
**March 21, 2012**

Spraberry: Hello and welcome to *AcademiCast* – Texas Tech University’s biweekly podcast series from the Office of the Provost. I’m Kaitlin Spraberry, and I’ll be covering the top academic stories on campus. Later in the program, Provost Bob Smith will spotlight Horn Professor David Knaff, a professor of biochemistry and director of the TTU Center for Biotechnology and Genomics.

First, the news...

Texas Tech dance students are expanding their repertoire. Performers with the modern dance company Ailey II treated students to a master class highlighting contemporary movements.

Genevieve Durham DeCesaro is the head of dance and associate chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance, which had an opportunity to work with Ailey II.

DeCesaro: Ailey II is the touring arm of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, which is one of America’s most prestigious modern dance companies, and it’s been in existence since the early 1960s, founded, obviously, by Alvin Ailey, who was a modern and theatrical dancer.

Spraberry: Ailey II performed at Texas Tech in February as part of the Presidential Lecture and Performance Series in the College of Visual and Performing Arts. DeCesaro says the dance company’s visit gave audiences a glimpse of the movements in contemporary dance and strengthened students’ skills in the form.

DeCesaro: When we have guest artists come in, any guest artist, we require that those companies provide our students with at least one master class experience. One of the great things about the class that the Ailey II company members taught was that it really was a different way of moving than most of the students are used to, so they really got to be invested in not only what the technique looks like and feels like, but what it feels like to take class with a group of people all moving like this.

Spraberry: The next event in the college’s lecture and performance series brings sitar player and composer Anoushka Shankar to the Allen Theatre on March 30th.

Texas Tech officials name animal science professor Michael Galyean as permanent dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. He has led the college on an interim basis since early 2011, when Dean John Burns retired. Since joining Texas Tech’s faculty in 1998, Galyean has earned several awards for his teaching and research,

and he became a Horn Professor in 2006. His appointment as permanent dean begins April 1st.

The School of Law's appellate teams are bound for Chicago to compete in the ABA National Appellate Advocacy Competition. Texas Tech's two teams qualified for nationals after winning regional championships in Boston. Texas Tech was one of two law schools to capture dual regional championships in the competition.

The Horn Professorship is the most prestigious designation bestowed upon a faculty member by the Texas Tech University System Board of Regents. The professorship is named for Paul Whitfield Horn, the first president of Texas Tech University. Horn professors are known for their outstanding teaching, research, and creative accomplishments. In this edition of *AcademiCast*, Provost Bob Smith profiles Horn Professor David Knaff.

Smith: In addition to directing the Texas Tech Center for Biotechnology & Genomics, David Knaff is a Horn Professor in the Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry. He was accorded the Horn Professor distinction in 1987—eleven years after he came to teach at Texas Tech. In that span of time Professor Knaff became recognized for his contributions in the classroom and in the laboratory. His research & scholarship primarily involve plant photosynthetic processes.

Knaff: It's essentially a lab that looks in very close detail at the mechanism of enzymes involved in taking electrons produced in photosynthesis and using them to reduce compounds into useful goodies for plants. And it involves a huge amount of techniques. We do genetics. We use physical measurements, biochemical measurements. So I think the exciting thing about photosynthesis, it's sort of the ultimate multi-disciplinary sort of research.

Smith: Professor Knaff also teaches a number of classes each year.

Knaff: We have two flavors of biochemistry courses for biochemistry majors, and some related majors for our colleagues in biological sciences we teach a three-semester sequence. But there are students in other disciplines who just need a one-semester survey course.

Smith: The TTU Center for Biotechnology and Genomics, which Professor Knaff leads, provides additional educational opportunities for students.

Knaff: We have a two-year master's program to train students to work at the bench in the biotech industry. We train a bunch of—we don't do corpses or bullets—but we train about ten/fifteen students every semester in the forensic science program in using DNA

mapping as forensic tool. We have a dual degree program with the School of Law, so students get a JD and MS simultaneously if they want to do intellectual property or patent. We have a high-tech lab course. I'm involved in teaching that. I'm the head of the seminar program.

Smith: Professor Knaff sees his two main scholarly pursuits—teaching and research—as being complementary and coherent.

Knaff: I think we say all the time that teaching and research are, I think this is a legal term, inextricably intertwined, but it really is true. And I think the idea that you would say research is here, teaching is there, and how do we balance them, is not the best realistic approach because the two—in trying to figure out how you can explain your research productively to students, a teaching activity—it makes you think more deeply about your research. Being able to teach students and get them involved in your research enriches and makes more productive the researcher.

Smith: Professor Knaff also believes that maintaining a focus on family is essential to his professional life.

Knaff: Never mind balancing teaching and research—families are, at the end of the day, the most important things. And I know from the experience with my daughter, that you turn around, and they go from being 3 months, you know, to being 30 years old, and no matter how important your career is, I think you don't want to miss any of those things. And I think we're better at what we do if we have, we spend some time doing stuff that has nothing to do with our career.

Smith: Twenty-five years after being named a Horn Professor, David Knaff says he still feels esteemed to have received an accolade that acknowledges his scholarly work and allows him to speak on behalf of his colleagues.

Knaff: There's this famous statement, I think attributed to Isaac Newton that the only reason he'd been able to see far is that he stood on the shoulders of giants, and I think we all do that in the scholarly endeavor, and so there were so many people who I had admired and respected so much who had been Horn professors before me. In my case it's been a sort of double honor because from time to time we may be called upon to advise the provost and president on matters of scholarly and academic excellence, and we have done so. Sometimes we've been called on. Sometimes we uninvitedly put our foot in. So the fact that, not only that it's been a real honor to be recognized as a Horn Professor, but that my colleagues who are enormously distinguished scholars, have seen fit to elect me as their spokesperson, to be the liaison has really been an honor.

Smith: Similarly, the University has been blessed to have as devoted an academician as Professor Knaff within its community. His accomplishments set him apart as a Horn Professor.

Thanks for listening! I'm Bob Smith.

Spraberry: Thanks, Dr. Smith! If you would like to learn more about Horn Professor David Knaff, please visit our website at **[academicast.ttu.edu](http://academicast.ttu.edu)**.

Finally, *AcademiCast* would like to recognize marketing professor Shelby Hunt for winning the Sheth Award for Best Paper in the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science. Professor Hunt's research is titled, "Sustainable marketing, equity, and economic growth: A resource-advantage, economic freedom approach."

That concludes this edition of *AcademiCast*. If you would like to learn more about our program or 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.