

***AcademiCast* Transcript**  
**Texas Tech University**  
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**Irlbeck:** Looking at the Chernobyl disaster, 25 years later.

Hello everyone, I'm Scott Irlbeck and this is *AcademiCast*, brought to you by Texas Tech University.

Following one of the world's worst environmental disasters to date, Dr. Ron Chesser, director of Texas Tech's Center for Environmental Radiation Studies, was the first American scientist allowed full access to the exclusion zone in Chernobyl. Chesser and other environmental scientists could not believe the abundance of plant and animal species still thriving in the area deemed too dangerous for permanent human habitation.

***Chesser:*** *The first time I went over there I was quite naïve. I thought that really some of these biological effects would be quite obvious. You'd think that with the high radiation that was released by Chernobyl that you would easily see some type of genetic change, you may see some morphological variance that you wouldn't normally see, and you may see some species that are gone, some species that should be there that are outside of the zone that are not inside. But over the years, we've learned that nature is much more resilient than we first thought, and that what we would call high radiation, in biological terms of causing damage, is low dose. It's hard to convince some people that Chernobyl is low dose; everywhere you look there's radiation. The amount of energy that's imparted into biological tissues is still not sufficient to cause a great degree of genetic damage.*

**Irlbeck:** Others have conducted research at Chernobyl, but Chesser says it's time for the various groups to come together to determine what's next for the damaged area.

Dr. Brenda Rodgers, an assistant professor of biological sciences, has also worked on the Chernobyl Project, and she says the site serves as a hands-on classroom filled with information for upcoming scientists interested in studying the effects of radiation.

***Rodgers:*** *It's been an incredible opportunity for students, myself included. That's how I got involved in the project. I was listening to a seminar about the research that was going on there and decided it was something I wanted to get involved in. So I did my dissertation research there at Chernobyl. Since that time, I've had the opportunity then to take my own students to the region. I've had three students now do either a master's thesis or part of their dissertation work in the Chernobyl region.*

**Irlbeck:** In addition to Dr. Chesser and Rodgers, other Texas Tech faculty members on the project include Dr. Robert Baker and Dr. Carleton Phillips.

Moving on to our integrated scholar segment, we are featuring Dr. Ron Mitchell, who has been honored for his extensive research, teaching and service to the business profession. He also recently published a new book. Here's Provost Bob Smith with more.

**Smith:** Transitioning from a practitioner to an academic was a mid-career move for Dr. Ron Mitchell, who is a professor and the Jean Austin Bagley Regents Chair in Management at Texas Tech's Rawls College of Business Administration. Dr. Mitchell is a Certified Public Accountant who worked many years in private business before beginning his career in academia.

***Mitchell:** I studied accounting because somebody said accounting is the language of business, and I thought that'd be kind of like learning a language. So I went in and I studied accounting, not because I wanted to be an accountant but because I wanted this language. I got my business degree, went into accounting, became a CPA and started working like doing audits and tax returns and stuff. Eventually I left that and started doing sort of work in large organizations, kind of working the way up the management ladder. Well after I did that then it was time to kind of branch out, and so I went to work for an entrepreneur who was investing in all these different businesses, and that was really exciting. Eventually I thought I am so interested in this, I wonder what other people know about this.*

**Smith:** That interest in entrepreneurship led him to graduate school where he earned his Ph.D. in business administration following 14 years working in the private business sector. Dr. Mitchell works on a variety of research projects with doctoral students, and he is personally interested in research that extends the idea of "expertise" and how it blends with personal and professional talents. In recent years, he has had several opportunities to work on scholarly projects with his two sons, who have also chosen to work in academic careers.

***Mitchell:** I have two sons who are in academe as well. One's a professor at the University of Western Ontario and the other's a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota, and I do research projects with them. I have more fun than I ever imagined. You kind of grow up with these great boys and then young men, and you do all the stuff that dads and sons do. So we have the snorkeling stuff, and we have the cycling stuff; it just goes on and on. We've done all these activity-based kinds of things. I suppose they watched dad go back to school in the middle of his career, and as part of that they were putting in, maybe at the beginning, part of their own 10,000 hours. They kind of saw how that whole process would work. So when it came time for them to start choosing careers, they understood what it might take to do it and how they might be able to fit.*

**Smith:** Besides Dr. Mitchell's several research projects, he teaches many courses at Texas Tech, including Entrepreneurial Creation and Discovery, Directed Experience Entrepreneurship and Directed Study in Technology Commercialization, among others. Dr. Mitchell says teaching is one of the highlights of his job, but he finds that effective teaching is dependent on being an effective researcher and reaching out to the community to solve problems.

***Mitchell:** I love to teach. Part of the integrated scholar is, I suppose, that you can't really stop us from researching because we love to research, and you can't stop us from*

*teaching because we love to teach, and you can't stop us from serving because one serves the other. Research leads us to having interesting things to say in the classroom, and what's in the classroom leads us to reach out to the community to find connections for our students. Which then raises questions that if we could only research them, we'd have better answers. So it's this inner-supportive kind of situation.*

**Smith:** A book, titled: *In Search of Research Excellence: Exemplars in Entrepreneurship*, is yet another project Dr. Mitchell has been working on. The book came out this spring, and is meant to assist business graduate students and junior faculty in understanding the ins and outs of publishing research in some of the top entrepreneurial peer-reviewed journals. Let's listen as Dr. Mitchell explains the book in some further detail.

**Mitchell:** *What happens when people come into a research field like new doctoral students or young junior professors, is that, like any profession, it's kind of a craft. How you learn this craft of becoming an expert researcher is rather mystifying to a lot of the junior folks. I thought if I could only get the people who are the top journal editors, the people who are publishing within these journals all together in one room and ask them questions, kind of in an interview format, I could ask them the hard questions, like how hard is it to get in your journal? And how do you write to get there? So we did this for the 10 top journals that publish entrepreneurship research, brought the editors and the authors together, we videotaped the whole thing, and then we took the data that we acquired, all of these interviews, distilled it down into chapters, brought in a few keynotes, you know the luminaries in the field, as well as wrote sort of an overall conceptual chapter at the beginning. And what this will give is anybody who's a junior scholar an opportunity to see what the people who are really capable, who have actually sort of climbed the mountains and done what's needed to get to the top of the craft, how they did it and why.*

**Smith:** Clearly, Dr. Ron Mitchell is dedicated to the field of business and the discipline of entrepreneurship as demonstrated not only by his outstanding teaching, research and service, but also his effective integration of all these efforts for the benefit of students, his profession and society. We would like to thank him for his integrated scholarship and contributions to Texas Tech and beyond. Thanks for listening! I'm Bob Smith.

**Irlbeck:** Thanks, Dr. Smith. You can find more on all of these stories in Texas Tech's online research magazine, *Discoveries*, published for the first time this month. Visit [www.texastechdiscoveries.ttu.edu](http://www.texastechdiscoveries.ttu.edu). For *AcademiCast*, I'm Scott Irlbeck.