

***AcademiCast* Transcript**
Texas Tech University
November 16, 2011

Butler: Hello and welcome to *AcademiCast* – Texas Tech University’s biweekly podcast series from the Office of the Provost. I’m Kristina Butler, and I’ll be covering the top academic stories on campus. Later in the program, Provost Bob Smith will spotlight Integrated Scholar Cindy Akers, a professor of agricultural communications.

And now, the news...

Texas Tech’s recently formed Transdisciplinary Research Academy is now accepting applications for its first members. The academy intends to bring together faculty from varying disciplines so they can explore issues with global reach.

Michael San Francisco, associate vice president for research, explains how the academy aims to make an impact.

San Francisco: “The Transdisciplinary Academy is a wonderful opportunity for faculty from different disciplines to come together, come up with new ideas and then work as teams to develop new concepts, new solutions to solve global issues. So the academy serves as a focal point for the intersection of both our university, Texas Tech university’s strategic aims and our foci with those of those of the grand challenges facing our nation and world.”

Butler: Dr. San Francisco adds that obtaining external funding is not the only aim of the academy.

San Francisco: “Some examples of outputs would be white papers to foundations, grant proposals to foundations and agencies, educational outcomes such as new curricula, and also involving people, getting them out of their comfort zones and putting them in an area where they’ll have a greater impact for the long-term good.”

Butler: Faculty who are interested in applying must be nominated by their college deans. The application deadline is 5 p.m. on December 7th. Applications will be reviewed by a committee. The academy will inaugurate its new members on January 27th.

Forty faculty members are receiving more than \$440,000 in grants through an internal funding competition at Texas Tech. The Internal Competitive Funding Opportunity to Advance Scholarship in the Creative Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences was introduced this year. The competition helps to support scholarship and creativity of faculty in disciplines that receive little external funding. Proposals were peer-reviewed. Nearly 90 proposals were submitted.

Texas Tech's University College will begin offering a certificate in human resource management in the spring semester. The college partnered with the Society for Human Resource Management to launch the certificate program. The curriculum examines key areas in human resources for newcomers and provides professional development for experienced HR specialists. Those who complete the program's six required courses and the review will receive a certificate.

Agricultural communications professor Cindy Akers has earned the distinction of Integrated Scholar at Texas Tech. Provost Bob Smith takes a moment to recognize her contributions to teaching, research, and service.

Smith: Raised in Estancia, New Mexico, Professor Cindy Akers is a fourth-generation agriculturalist. Her family has long been involved in farming & ranching, & she knew early on that agriculture held a place for her. When she arrived at Texas Tech as an undergraduate, Professor Akers also gained an appreciation for the communications field.

Akers: I was really excited when I found the degree of ag communications because I could be an advocate for the field that I loved so much. ... I was passionate about the field of agriculture and so I looked at different areas because it has been something that has been so important to me my grandparents and generations before me and so I knew that this was the field I loved and so that's the reason I actually found communications after the field of agriculture.

Smith: Professor Akers received her bachelor's degree in agricultural communications & then a master's degree in agricultural education from Texas Tech. She worked in the agriculture industry for four years before returning to Texas Tech to earn a doctorate. Since 2000 she has been a professor in the College of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources. Professor Akers has taught an assortment of courses covering writing & technology topics, & over the years she has received outstanding teaching awards from her students & peers. Research has also been a key element of Professor Akers' scholarly life.

Akers: Currently, I have two different areas of research focus that I'm working on. One is in the area of communications is kind of media messages and getting the information out to the public the most effective way, but then also another area of interest that has kind of grown is in the student services area of recruitment retention and career placement.

Smith: Being a professor has also allowed Akers to illuminate the educational & career paths of agricultural communications students. Even more so through the work she does with faculty & students within the college—serving in her role as assistant dean of academic & student programs.

Akers: My favorite part of my job is advising students and dealing one on one with students and getting that opportunity to meet with a student that may not know exactly what they want to do and helping them get excited about a profession about a career or get over some kind of a struggle because sometimes a student's biggest fear is that they're not confident in themselves and if you can help a student be confident in what they're doing and realize that they're good at what they're doing its just amazing to see the growth in that confidence and that's probably my one of my favorite things is to get that opportunity to work with those students who just need a little bit of a push.

Smith: In return, Professor Akers says she is energized and inspired by her students.

Akers: I love Texas Tech. I feel fortunate that I have the best job, one of the best jobs in the world because I get to work with students that are young. They keep you young. Every single day, I mean, they graduate and I still have that young crew coming in that are excited to start this new adventure in their life and I see it as a great job that I have that I get to help with that process.

Smith: Professor Akers also gives back through service projects.

Akers: I help quite a bit with the national FFA on ag communications career development events to other leadership development events and curriculum development and different things like that with the national FFA and the state FFA. I work with 4h. I'm on the host committee... Also I'm involved in commodity organizations and different things so I'm in a field that's very heavy in service and so that's kind of an area that you have to watch to make sure you don't overdo.

Smith: Professor Akers believes that faculty who strive to balance teaching, research & service are most rewarded—especially when their efforts are complementary.

Akers: You've really got to make a consorted effort to do all three and where it helps is if you can find a way to tie your research into your teaching and that they all are integrated and work together then what you're doing really isn't two different jobs or three different activities, you're helping every piece of what you do and its kind of a holistic approach to being a faculty member.

Smith: That is excellent advice from Professor Akers. Her achievements in teaching, research & service are highly valued at Texas Tech & distinguish her as an Integrated Scholar.

Thanks for listening! I'm Bob Smith.

Butler: Thanks, Dr. Smith!

And finally, AcademiCast would like to announce that this edition marks our one-year anniversary. Take a look back at the news and learn more about other outstanding scholars at Texas Tech by visiting our website at www.academicast.ttu.edu.

Thanks for listening and join us again in two more weeks for that latest academic news from Texas Tech University. See you next time!