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Sims: Need to know about snakes? Well Texas Tech biology graduate student Jeremy Weaver – has an app for that.

This tops today’s edition of AcademiCast. I’m Angie Sims.

When it launched, Weaver’s iPhone app – TXSnakes – ranked in the top 25 paid-reference applications in the Apple App Store. TXSnakes allows users to narrow the search for a specific snake through geographic regions and the pattern on the reptile’s skin.

Weaver combined his interest in app programming with his passion for snakes – a species he believes is misunderstood and often misidentified.

***Weaver:** If people were going to be interested in what I was building, they could sort of use it to understand them a little bit better and learn that maybe that’s not a poisonous snake and maybe they shouldn’t kill it.*

Sims: Weaver points to the common Bull snake as one that is often misidentified, but in reality, it is harmless. Weaver also created snake apps for Oklahoma and Kansas.

The U.S. Office of National Drug Control Policy recently cited the Texas Tech Center for the Study of Addiction and Recovery as the model for collegiate recovery programs. The center provides peer-based support, 12-step support, and academic services for more than 80 students in recovery from drug and alcohol addictions, as well as eating disorders. Center Director Kitty Harris is working with officials in Washington, D.C., to create new drug policy based on the findings at the center. Texas Tech’s program is now replicated at 21 campuses nationwide, with several more scheduled to open in the fall.

Two books by Texas Tech faculty are drawing international attention.

Constance Cortez’s biography of Chicana artist Carmen Lomas Garza recently won first place in the Best Arts Book category of the 2011 International Latino Book Awards. Cortez, an art historian in the School of Art, wrote the book as part of the series “A Ver: Revisioning Art History” conducted by UCLA’s Chicano Art Research Center. The book examines how Garza’s art reflects her experiences growing up in South Texas, especially the relationship between family and community.

Another new book looks at the cultural impact of the television show *Mystery Science Theater 3000*.

In the Peanut Gallery with Mystery Science Theater 3000: Essays on Film, Fandom, Technology and Culture of Riffing, is written by Texas Tech Librarians Rob Weiner and Shelley Barba.

If you’re not familiar with the show – it features a man and his robot sidekicks, who are held hostage on a space station by an evil scientist and forced to view a collection of “bad” movies.

Weiner is interested in how the series develops a new relationship between film and audience by providing a running commentary – called riffing – in which they humorously mock each film.

Weiner: *There was a time when you didn't break that fourth wall, when you didn't talk back to the screen or care about the show, or even know about it. But now, there is this whole culture of people doing their own commentaries to movies.*

Sims: Weiner said he was surprised at how huge the culture of riffing has become. The book includes essays and interviews with the series' creator and cast members.

An interest in artist Donald Judd brought Urs Peter Flueckiger to Texas Tech. It's the creative way he blends art and architecture to take students out of the traditional classroom setting that makes him an integrated scholar. Here's Provost Smith.

Smith: Professor Urs Peter, or "Upe" Flueckiger has always had a passion for art and artistic forms in architecture. His love for the architecture craft led him to Lubbock, where he is currently a practicing architect and Associate Professor in Texas Tech's College of Architecture.

Flueckiger is a valued integrated scholar at Texas Tech, mainly because he takes part in unique research opportunities and finds ways for his students to learn in "hands-on" ways. He also finds creative ways to blend the fields of art and architecture – two areas that he has had interest in since childhood.

Flueckiger: *I always loved to draw. From my early childhood I remembered that. Drawing to me meant everything basically. So, I drew houses, but I also drew landscapes. I was very interested in that. The struggle went on for quite some time, so I wasn't sure whether I would become an artist or an architect. So part of my education went into art and then back to architecture, and again into art, and ultimately into architecture again.*

Smith: Flueckiger holds a master's degree in architecture from Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. Before joining the faculty at Texas Tech, he worked for several architectural firms in Switzerland, including the office of Mario Botta – and in New York City, in the office of David Rockwell.

Flueckiger's interest in the architectural design of Donald Judd and his design collection in Marfa, Texas, led Flueckiger to West Texas and the Texas Tech campus. And this interest, caused Flueckiger to write and have published, the award-winning book, *Donald Judd: Architecture in Marfa, Texas*.

Besides his interest in Donald Judd, Flueckiger has had his own design work featured in the New York Times, Texas Architect and numerous other journals, magazines and books.

Since Flueckiger has been teaching at Texas Tech, his philosophy of student-centered education and out-of-classroom learning has truly made him an innovative educator. For example,

Professor Flueckiger has recently worked with his students and fellow faculty members to complete a sustainable cabin as a research design project.

Flueckiger: *The interest basically was, how can we bring in sustainability into affordable housing? And prior to that, I designed together with my wife our own home, which is based on the low-cost, affordable mantra. And the logical step of that would be well how we make that sustainable? I also felt that we did not have many precedence here at Texas Tech about sustainable architecture. I feel it is important to expose students and the community to examples similar, like chemistry has labs that make certain experiments. And here is an experiment for us in sustainability to see how that performs on sight, space and material choices. But also, and perhaps most important, in sustainable technology. So, we are going to see how those solar panels perform and what's the output of this entire project.*

Smith: As a scholar and researcher, Flueckiger is interested in the evolving nature of architectural design and directs his studies towards identifying how the understanding of architectural drawings can be meaningfully incorporated into the learning process for students.

Flueckiger says that the best way to balance his responsibilities as an integrated scholar is to be dedicated to a project, follow through with it and work in collaborative efforts with others.

Let's hear him describe a collaborative project he has worked on with peers in Texas Tech's College of Education. The effort, called the "Book Worm Project," also provides for service-learning opportunities for students.

Flueckiger: *Service learning started out for me as an important part to reach out to those people who maybe don't have as much. One service-learning project we did was with Rosa Sheets Hernandez from Education. We basically did a project together called 'The Book Worm,' which was located in the Salvation Army here downtown Lubbock. And what it does is we provided shelves and play area for children who come there and play, and actually purchase a book, or being read to, and the book would actually be affordable price. So the concept idea is to give them a space for young children, how to learn, how to read because her studies basically showed that children with having little access to books can fall quicker behind in terms of their learning outcome.*

Smith: Flueckiger says that his interactions with young people – seeing how they – as students progress and blossom during their education – are the biggest rewards for the work he does at Texas Tech.

His advice for other faculty? Be passionate about your work and working with others– from students to faculty and other colleagues.

Flueckiger: *Be passionate in what you're doing, pick a project and try to stick with it. And perhaps most important, follow through even though when sometimes the perspective doesn't*

look as promising as it did in the beginning. The most important parts are to follow through on a project and care for others, because every project is depending on other people. So, collaborative efforts are very important in this.

Smith: The passion Professor Urs Peter Flueckiger has for his profession and his contributions to Texas Tech have led, in part, to his recognition as an integrated scholar.

We would like to thank him for his generous dedication to his craft and his contributions to student learning and success. Thanks for listening! I'm Bob Smith.

Sims: Thanks, Dr. Smith. Finally, Texas Tech is one of only 24 public institutions named a "Best Buy School" in the 2012 Fiske Guide to Colleges. The rating is based on the quality of academic offerings in relation to the cost of attendance.

Thanks for joining us for this edition of AcademiCast, brought to you by Texas Tech University.