

AcademiCast Transcript
Texas Tech University
February 8, 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 stores on campus. Later in the program, Provost Bob Smith will spotlight Integrated Scholar Carolyn Tate, a professor of art history.

First, the news...

Texas Tech names the first members to its Transdisciplinary Research Academy.

Thirty-four faculty from varying disciplines make up nine teams that will explore issues with a global reach.

Aside from landing external funding, academy members aim to develop white papers, grant proposals, new curriculum, and other educational outcomes from the research they produce.

Michael San Francisco, associate vice president for research, shared his thoughts about the academy's first cohort.

San Francisco: "Quote goes here..."

Spraberry: College deans nominated faculty for the academy, and prospective members were screened by a committee of deans, associate deans, professors, and the Office of the Vice President for Research.

In other research news, a group of Texas Tech investigators is working with the US Department of Agriculture to keep salmonella out of beef. Texas Tech was awarded nearly \$700,000 to study cattle and find ways of reducing the bacteria's presence in meat. The research is funded by the USDA and the Cattlemen's Beef Board.

The university is strengthening representation of its graduate student body. The Graduate Student Advisory Council will focus on improving campus life and resolving issues for those pursuing advanced degrees. Twenty graduate students will be elected to serve on the council, along with two senators from the Student Government Association.

Meanwhile, the School of Law was well-represented at the National Moot Court Competition in New York City. Texas Tech's team won its second consecutive national championship there, besting the University of California-Berkeley in the final round of competition. Third-year law students Brandon Beck, Allie Hallmark, and Elizabeth Hill were coached by professor Rob Sherwin. The moot court victory was preceded by Texas Tech's win at the American Bar

Association Arbitration Competition in Chicago. The law school has been named national champion in the arbitration competition three times since 2008. This year's arbitration team included third-year law student Wade Iverson and second-year law students Kate Murphy, Jared Mullowney, and Meredith Mills.

A desire to learn about the world has driven Professor Carolyn Tate to study and explore. Tate is a professor of art history in the College of Visual and Performing Arts, and her contributions to her field and the university allow her to stand apart. Provost Bob Smith recognizes Texas Tech Integrated Scholar Carolyn Tate for her teaching, research and service efforts here.

Smith: Born to a military family, Professor Carolyn Tate resided in nearly 40 cities in five countries as she was growing up. She later adopted Austin as her educational home and attended the University of Texas. Professor Tate took courses on art history and an assortment of other subjects, which allowed her to receive bachelor's degrees in ceramics, printmaking and art history. Her interest in pre-Columbian art history led her to graduate studies at UT, where she earned master's and doctoral degrees in the field.

Tate: Art History is a way for us in the modern era to explore the beliefs and attitudes of previous civilizations. And what I'm interested in is the civilizations that are prehistoric. And so there is no writing about them, and they did not themselves write, mostly. And so what we have to study them with is their art objects. And so that is why I got into art history. Is that I really wanted to find out about the world.

Smith: Professor Tate's scholarship focuses on the pre-Columbian period, which concentrates on the native people of North and South America before the arrival of Europeans.

Tate: The history of the Americas is fascinating. The people on North and South America did amazing things. They built some of the longest-lasting civilizations in the world. They made all kinds of technological developments in terms of astronomy, timekeeping and writing. The Maya developed one of the only five writing systems ever developed in the entire world, was developed on this continent, North America. So they are inherently interesting. But why we should know about them is to make our own consciousness complete. We need to learn from what they did and we need to honor and respect those people and their descendants.

Smith: In addition to her expertise in the ancient Maya, Professor Tate has extensively studied the art of the Olmec, a civilization that flourished in Mesoamerica from about 1400 BC to 400 BC. The outcome of her more than 15 years of research is the book *Reconsidering Olmec Visual Culture*, which was published in January. In the book, Professor Tate considers the prominence of women, infants and embryos in Olmec societies.

Tate: So this whole book is about the images of women and images of the unborn that have been recognized, people have seen these things, but they didn't know what they were, so I'm trying to explain what they are. At least 25 percent of all the Olmec imagery in stone – not counting ceramic sculptures – at least 25 percent of it portrayed women, and then another 25 percent of it portrayed unborn human beings – human embryos and human fetuses. I do think they saw the embryo as life's potential. You know it changes so rapidly from week to week, and

I'm sure they were able to observe embryos at different weeks. So there's this idea of rapid growth, rapid transformation, and rapid potential. And I think that's what they were making a symbol of – the concept of life and growth – and that's why it was such a major symbol.

Smith: Professor Tate lectured and curated art for a number of years before joining the faculty at Texas Tech in 1993. Aside from her research and time in the classroom, she has handled an assortment of service projects over the years, including serving on administrative search committees and the Faculty Senate. Professor Tate also helped to introduce the new master's degree program in art history.

Tate: The good thing about teaching in a university and a research institution is that it is a blend of activities. You don't just teach. You keep your teaching alive by doing research. And you keep the institution alive by doing service. I always try to take on projects that I would be good at and that I'm interested in and that will advance the whole program or the university in some way.

Smith: Like Professor Tate, junior faculty members who strive to be Integrated Scholars could also stand out by concentrating on their interests and strengths. By applying themselves in teaching, research, and service, faculty members can make lasting impressions on their students, colleagues, and disciplines.

Thanks for listening! I'm Bob Smith.

Spraberry: Thanks, Dr. Smith! You can learn more about Professor Tate and other Integrated Scholars by visiting our website at **academicast.ttu.edu**.

And finally, AcademiCast would like to congratulate Wail Amor and Ann Marie Scott for their impressive finishes at the annual meeting of the American Society for Microbiology. Amor, a biology doctoral candidate, placed first at the meeting's poster presentation. Amor's research focused on the use of a garlic-based ointment to treat burn wounds. Scott, a cell and molecular biology junior, captured second place with her poster on the antibacterial effectiveness of selenium.

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**. Thanks for listening, and join us again in two more weeks for the latest academic news from Texas Tech University.

Links:

First Transdisciplinary Research Academy Members Announced

<http://today.ttu.edu/2012/01/first-transdisciplinary-research-academy-members-announced/>

Researchers Help Keep Salmonella Out of Beef

<http://today.ttu.edu/2012/01/researchers-help-keep-salmonella-out-of-beef/>

Graduate Students Represented By New Organization

<http://today.ttu.edu/2012/01/graduate-students-represented-by-new-organization/>

Biology Students Gain Impressive Win at Competition

<http://today.ttu.edu/2012/02/biology-students-gain-impressive-win-at-competition/>

A new vice chancellor and general counsel begins his duties with the Texas Tech University System. John Huffaker will provide legal counsel to the system and its component institutions, as well as oversee the legal teams at each university. Huffaker previously served as a member of the system's Board of Regents for three years. And before that, he practiced law in Amarillo.

Former Regent Named New Vice Chancellor and General Counsel: <http://today.ttu.edu/2012/02/former-regent-named-new-vice-chancellor-and-general-counsel/>