Pierce: Hello and welcome to “AcademiCast”—Texas Tech University’s biweekly podcast series from the Office of the Provost. I’m Rachel Pierce, and I’ll be covering the top academic stories on campus. Later in the program, Provost Bob Smith will spotlight Student of Integrated Scholarship Alyssa Ingrum.

First, the news...

Developing strong communication skills is critical in the workplace, in particular, the field of science. Students in Texas Tech’s biotechnology master’s program will have an advantage in the job market. Part of the program’s required curriculum is a scientific communications course, taught by Dr. Susan San Francisco and Dr. Stephanie Lockwood. Dr. San Francisco says the class helps students to strengthen their speaking and writing skills.

San Francisco: The ability to communicate what they’re doing is absolutely critical. And I think no matter how good a scientist you are, if you can’t communicate that, it won’t matter. It just won’t matter. So those are just hugely important skills that I think you really can’t go to the next step if you can’t talk about your data in a way that’s meaningful. And I think scientists are going to be called on more to do that, anyway. So many of these issues, especially in biotech, are starting to get on the edges of legal things, ethical things, and scientists are going to have to be able to talk about what they do.

Pierce: The course covers a range of topics, including oral presentations, reading and organizing scientific papers, writing summaries of scientific literature, and resume writing and interviewing. The final project in the course is a poster presentation.

To learn more about the biotechnology master’s program, visit our website at academicast.ttu.edu.

The Texas Tech University System Board of Regents names its newest Horn Professor. Agricultural economics professor Thomas Knight received the honor in recognition of his scholarly contributions to the university. Knight has worked at Texas Tech since 2002. The Horn Professorship is the highest honor that a faculty member at Texas Tech can receive.

The university’s Upward Bound program receives a $2.5 million (two and a half million dollar) grant from the U.S. Department of Education. The funds will be dispersed over five years and enable the program to prepare high school students for the demands of college. Upward Bound is part of the Division of Institutional Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement.

Along with a commitment to academics, Students of Integrated Scholarship pursue a course of lifelong learning through their involvement in active learning. Modes of active learning include internships, service learning experiences, undergraduate and graduate research, and opportunities to study abroad. In this edition of AcademiCast, Provost Bob Smith spotlights Alyssa Ingrum, a Student of Integrated Scholarship.
Smith: Early in her journey as an undergraduate, Alyssa Ingrum decided to remap the course of her life. She originally majored in human development & family studies, but she changed her focus after a trip to Africa & an inspirational dream.

Ingrum: I went to Africa over the summer before college started, and I wanted to do that for the rest of my life, but get paid for it. And that doesn’t exist. It sounds kind of silly, but I just had a dream that I was a special ed major, and I changed my major the next morning and ever since then I’ve just been getting really involved with things to see if that fits me, and sure enough it’s been awesome. And that’s what’s led me here, and everything’s proved that that is something that my heart just really loves to do.

Smith: Now in her senior year, Ingrum is student-teaching full time at Bean Elementary School in Central Lubbock. This active learning experience allows her to work one-on-one with special-needs children.

Ingrum: Student teaching is a four-month program, and it’s the last semester before you graduate. I’m building lessons. I’m working with the kids. I plan assessments. I monitor. I do everything I’m going to do when I have my own classroom, but for now the accountability isn’t on me, it’s on my teacher. And so it’s just a great way of practicing really.

Smith: In addition to inspiring a career shift, Ingrum’s outreach in Africa has motivated her to return each summer since 2008. Upon noticing the lack of quality drinking water there, Ingrum resolved to help bring clean water to Africans by building wells. She & her friends have raised money through their nonprofit organization, Project H2O.

Ingrum: One girl told me – she asked me if I wanted water, which it’s not really safe to drink water in a third world nation, so I didn’t have any, but she went and went to a local river, which had all their trash, and there was a little child swimming in it, and it’s where a lot of people also use the restroom, and that’s where she got her water. And she would boil it, but it’s still not, I mean it’s still not clean. There’s a difference between clean water and the water that she got and then boiled. Seeing that was just horrendous. No child, especially, deserves to live in that. So Project H2O was started on the Tech campus to just fight that cause and really most importantly just tell people about the world water crisis because no one knows about it. We’ve built one well, which is $5,000, and we’re halfway to another.

Smith: Ingrum has also traveled to Spain to engage in another active-learning experience: study abroad. In Spain, she studied in Seville with many other Texas Tech students.

Ingrum: I highly suggest it for any other Tech students who want to study abroad that Seville in Spain is just awesome. We got to go to Madrid, we got to go to Toledo. So many other like cities
in Spain. We even got to go to Portugal. And it was just an incredible experience, and we stayed with a host mom, and my Spanish got a lot better. So now, a lot of these kids are very cultural, and most of them are bilingual, and so like I’ll hear them talking and I actually know what they mean now, because I can finally understand Spanish after being in Spain for two months over the summer.

Smith: Ingrum has accomplished much while pursuing her bachelor’s degree, & she encourages her fellow students to follow the paths their hearts lead them to, in order to find happiness & experience a sense of accomplishment.

Ingrum: When you’re doing something that you love, it just kind of comes natural. And I’m not saying that it comes easy, but it just, it flows from like a heart of joy, and it just, it becomes something that you desire and that you push for and strive for.

Smith: By traveling a route that challenged & best suited her, Alyssa Ingrum became involved in a number of active-learning experiences, including studying- & serving- abroad. By doing so she learned a lesson aptly described by author Evan Schwartz: “there’s but one surefire way of finding one’s innermost self—and that is to embark when the time comes on a journey. And the more arduous the adventure, the more perilous the path, the steeper the cliffs, the more dangerous the demons, the more choices one is forced to make—all the better for determining one’s true character.” Ingrum’s journey & service have augmented her four years at Texas Tech University & allowed her to stand out as a Student of Integrated Scholarship.

Thanks for listening! I’m Bob Smith.

Pierce: Thanks, Dr. Smith! If you would like to learn more about Texas Tech’s Students of Integrated Scholarship, please visit our website at academicast.ttu.edu.

Finally, AcademiCast would like to recognize the more than 3,600 students who graduated from Texas Tech this semester. Congratulations, Red Raiders!

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.