

AcademiCast Transcript
Texas Tech University
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Irlbeck: This is AcademiCast—Texas Tech University’s podcast series from the Office of the Provost. I’m Scott Irlbeck, and I’ll be covering the top academic and research news on campus. Later in the program, Provost Bob Smith will spotlight Integrated Scholar Christian Pongratz. First the news...

Hance: I’m proud to announce today that the Texas Tech Vision and Tradition Campaign has raised \$1 billion.

Irlbeck: Texas Tech is celebrating a grand achievement with the completion of the Vision and Tradition Campaign. Since 2005 the Texas Tech University System has raised \$1 billion in funds to support advancement of the system’s three universities.

Hance: This campaign, it is a historic moment for Texas Tech. Our alums and our friends of Texas Tech, they answered the call. We had 120,000 people who contributed to this campaign. A hundred and twenty thousand people. We had contributions from all 50 states and from 39 countries. You know that says something. That we are a worldwide institution.

Irlbeck: With donations arriving from around the world, the system is setting aside \$145 million for scholarships, more than \$70 million for faculty endowments, and more than \$470 million for academic and research programs.

Turning to other news...

A Texas Tech history professor is among a select group of scholars and experts to join an advisory committee assembled by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. Professor Ron Milam and his fellow committee members are working to craft a narrative and exhibits about the Vietnam War for the Education Center at the Wall. A groundbreaking for the education center will take place near the memorial, and construction is slated to begin later this year.

The ancient Olmec civilization is captivating the interests of readers far and wide, thanks to a book written by Texas Tech art history professor and Integrated Scholar Carolyn Tate. Her book—titled “Reconsidering Olmec Visual Culture”—earned an award for Outstanding Academic Title from the American Library Association’s Choice Magazine. The awards are reserved for the top tier of scholarly books and websites published each year in the U.S.

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Integrated Scholars dedicate themselves to a course of lifelong learning. Their emphasis on teaching, research and service helps to promote scholarly engagement. And in doing so, Integrated Scholars advance Texas Tech's role in educating, serving and inspiring others to pursue a path of lifelong learning. In this edition of AcademiCast, Provost Bob Smith spotlights Architecture Professor Christian Pongratz. Architecture professor Christain Integrated Scholar Christian Pongratz.

Smith: Professor Christian Pongratz has built an impressive career in architecture as both an academic & a practicing professional in the U.S. & in Italy. Pongratz is a native of Germany. But, he came to America to pursue graduate studies in architecture & establish his career. It was after years of professional work that Pongratz decided to try teaching.

Pongratz: Having studied in the U.S. and also having practiced in the U.S.—and still practicing in the U.S.—I started to teach. And I had contact with people in academia, and they invited me to start teaching, and I liked it a lot. It's very nice. And so I've developed a large part of my career in the U.S., after I left Germany.

Smith: Pongratz says his professional experiences inform his teaching. To bring students closer to technology & computation, he guided the development of the Master of Science Program in Digital Design & Fabrication after coming to Texas Tech. He has also crafted a study-abroad program that brings architecture students to Verona, Italy, where Pongratz, who is on a nine-month contract, works during the summer months.

Pongratz: We show them several cities in Italy, so they learn about how is the architecture. They learn about buildings that they've known only from books, and suddenly they see them alive. So it's very exciting for them. And we have a lot of students who are interested, not only in study abroad in general, but also to Italy. So it's a very popular program that we are doing.

Smith: Pongratz has conducted research into design computation & geometry, building materials & assembly, & construction assembly processes. His work has focused largely on the building envelope, which divides a building's interior from the outdoors. The building envelope is essentially a structure's skin. Additionally, Pongratz has contributed his expertise by serving on design juries & working pro-bono with urban planners. Pongratz says his wide-ranging interests in science, technology, & design have inspired him to experiment with materials & methods.

Pongratz: My inspiration comes, I think, across many fields—biology a lot, sciences a lot—and I try to bring those into architecture. So I see somewhere new innovations, new principles, and I try to find out, say, "Wow, this is really possible." We can bring that to architecture and actually stimulate all new ways of how we design. It brings us new ideas of how we construct something. We can innovate how materials can actually change the way how we build.

Smith: Pongratz believes that integrated scholarship begins when academicians find their discourse. Faculty should be guided by their interests to develop their academic specialty, & from this starting point, the components of integrated scholarship should fall naturally into place.

Pongratz: I think the most important thing is to find a discourse. You have to find out what is your discourse. And this then allows you to set the parameters for where your work goes, where your design goes. You have to develop ideas, but the ideas have to have some kind of conceptual strength. So it's very important for us that you start on finding your discourse. From there, then you can leap into teaching. You can leap into research. And you can, of course, practice and do service related to that.

Smith: The eminent 20th Century philosopher, Martha Nussbaum noted (and, I quote): "We should not allow differences of nationality or class or ethnic membership or even gender to erect barriers between us & our fellow human beings. We should recognize humanity—& its fundamental ingredients, reason & moral capacity—wherever it occurs, & give that community of humanity our first allegiance."

A dedicated professional & academic, Professor Christian Pongratz has found his allegiance to humanity through the discipline of architecture & through his teaching, research & service—and particularly his caring concern for the intellectual & cultural development of students. There's no doubt that he'll continue to innovate as an Integrated Scholar & as a principal in the firm he operates with his wife, Maria Perbellini, who is a professor & chair of instruction in the College of Architecture.

Thanks for listening! I'm Bob Smith.

Irlbeck: Thanks, Dr. Smith! That concludes this edition of AcademiCast. If you would like to learn more about the program, please visit our website at academicast.ttu.edu. Join us again next time as we spotlight Integrated Scholar Anna Ribeiro.