

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

Texas Tech has a sole finalist for president. The TTU System Board of Regents has named Duane Nellis as its candidate to lead the university. Nellis currently serves as president of the University of Idaho. He was selected after a nationwide search that drew the attention of administrators at several universities. Regent Nancy Neal shared her thoughts on Nellis’ selection.

Neal: Texas Tech is placed so well in the mind of many, many outstanding people in academics. And it has just risen in stature. And we attracted an excellent group of candidates. And from that group it was a unanimous choice of the Board of Regents to recommend to the chancellor to recommend Dr. Nellis. And we’re very excited.

Pierce: Nellis’ administrative experience allowed him to stand out from competitors. While at the University of Idaho, Nellis attained record student enrollments, strengthened the research program, and led its largest fundraising campaign. Texas law requires that 21 days must pass before the university may finalize Nellis’ appointment. He will take over the office from interim president Lawrence Schovanec, who stepped in following the departure of Guy Bailey in August.

Pierce: Turning to other news...

The university is expanding its research footprint. An early design budget has been approved for a Research and Technology Park to be located at Fourth Street and Quaker Avenue. Plans are in the works for the park’s first building, which will span 125,000 square feet. The site will provide space for researchers at both Texas Tech and the Health Sciences Center, as well as accommodate businesses. A groundbreaking is expected at the end of the year.

Texas Tech faculty and staff are the happiest in higher education. That’s according to the website CareerBliss.com, which reviewed employee surveys to find the happiest workplaces. The surveys covered a number of areas, including compensation and growth opportunities. Texas Tech topped the likes of the University of Houston, the University of Wisconsin and Carnegie Mellon.

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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 Integrated Scholar Trent Seltzer.

Smith: Public relations professor Trent Seltzer is fascinated by politics, & his passion is reflected through his teaching, research, & service projects. Seltzer was born into a politically active family. He recalls from an early age that his father was always running for local office. This early exposure to politics helped Seltzer to cultivate a deep interest in the media's role in politics. His scholarship revolves around relationship management in public relations. He also examines social media & the strategic communications of political parties & campaigns, in order to gauge their influence on the public.

Seltzer: Relationships matter in the political context. Strategic communication from the parties & from the politicians can, in fact, influence the way people perceive those relationships & that having those perceptions does, in fact, seem to have some sort of outcome, whether it's supporting a candidate, civic participation or political participation. So parties should think, "What does this do to us in the long run?" And, "How does it affect our relationship with our constituents?" "How does this affect the other party's relationship with our constituents, other constituents?"

Smith: Seltzer notes that his research helps to inform his teaching. Correspondingly, his teaching & emphasis on service combine in his Public Relations Campaigns course for undergraduates. The Campaigns course centers on service learning by allowing students to create & pitch a public relations campaign for a nonprofit organization. Seltzer says the experiences gained during the course are invaluable for public relations students.

Seltzer: Our students go through the process of developing a PR campaign, putting together all the collateral material, doing the research to back it all up, & then pitching the clients at the end of the semester. The project's always something that's like for the good of the community. Somehow it ties in with, you know, improving some aspect of community, whether it's at the local, regional, national level. Some of our clients have included American Cancer Society, Community in Schools, the Lubbock Independent School District, the United States Air Force Academy's Endowment Board, & American Red Cross Dallas. The students, I think, they like it cause they get to see all these things we've talked about in all the other classes kind of come together when they do a real project for a real client. And they also, you know, I think usually find it very rewarding because it's something that helps the community.

Smith: Since he took on the role of department chair two years ago, Seltzer has been committed to strengthening the university's public relations program. His goals have included resurrecting the Tech PR student firm, establishing a scholarly journal, & organizing a regional conference for public relations practitioners. More than anything,

Seltzer believes in the strength of his colleagues & students to leverage the program's image.

Seltzer: We're kind of known nationally as a good place for public relations research, or at least an up-and-coming program. I think we're already outstanding. And so, I think, right now one of my main things I need to focus on are just trying to make everyone else out there in the academic community aware of how great we are.

Smith: Indeed, Seltzer has many responsibilities to balance as department chair, in addition to his teaching duties, research projects & service initiatives. As advice to faculty who intend to pursue a course of integrated scholarship, Seltzer says above all else, maintain your composure while striving toward your goals.

Seltzer: Arthur Page, who is one of the kind of great PR practitioners, he has these seven principles that he suggested to guide public relations practice. And I think they're all applicable, but the last principle is probably the most applicable, which is: "Be calm, patient & of good humor." And I think that's pretty good advice for a new faculty member. You need to remember to keep things in perspective. And so, be calm, be patient, you know, be of good humor, & if you can't remind yourself to do that, then surround yourself with people that will help you to remember to do that, you know, whether it's a mentor or just colleagues in your department.

Smith: A wise dean once noted that leadership involves making your work look easy—and in so doing putting your colleagues at ease. Moreover, the calmness that Professor Seltzer recommends inspires others to try to emulate your leadership qualities. In the context of calmness, patience & good humor, Trent Seltzer has applied his passion for politics to the field of media & communications, & since then has crafted a career in higher education that blends well his efforts in teaching, research, & service. Additionally, he has served as an effective leader in the College of Media & Communication. AcademiCast predicts that from here out, Professor Seltzer will be an academician well regarded alongside his fellow Integrated Scholars.

Thanks for listening! I'm Bob Smith.

Pierce: Thanks, Dr. Smith! That concludes this edition of AcademiCast. If you would like to learn more about the stories featured here, please visit our website at academicast.ttu.edu. Join us again as we spotlight the top academic and research news from Texas Tech University, as well as profile Integrated Scholar Bruce Clarke.