



Season 3 | Episode Five | Discovering What's Next

Quinn, Artificial Intelligence Interviewer: Hi, Kaitlyn. Great to meet you. I am Quinn and I will be conducting your interview. I went through your resume, and it is pretty impressive. For the interview, you will have 2 minutes for your first question and :90 seconds for each subsequent question. Let's get started.

(Music)

Taylor Peters, Host: I'M SITTING HERE IN MY OFFICE LISTENING TO OUR INTERN AS SHE STARTS AN INTERVIEW WITH THIS AI ROBOT, QUINN. IT'S A MOCK INTERVIEW SET UP THROUGH THE UNIVERSITY CAREER CENTER. IT SEEMS STRANGE AND OTHERWORLDLY TO ME- LIKE, THIS IS THE TIME THAT WE'RE LIVING IN. ITS WILD. TECHNOLOGY, SOCIAL MEDIA, WORK, LIFE, RELATIONSHIPS... EVERYTHING IS CHANGING SO MUCH AND SO FAST AND IF YOU'RE NOT KEEPING UP WITH IT, YOU RISK MISSING OUT ALL TOGETHER.

Peters: BUT THE TRADITIONAL, OLD FASHIONED, NON-SOCIAL MEDIA CONSUMING PART OF ME WANTS TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH OUR PEOPLE. AND I'M NOT ALONE. THIS EPISODE IS ALL ABOUT THE PLACES OUR REAL CONNECTIONS LIE- AND I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT INTERNET CONNECTION.

THIS IS EPISODE FIVE- DISCOVERING WHAT'S NEXT.

(Music)

Peters: ON THE THIRD FLOOR OF DRANE HALL, TODD CHAMBERS IS SITTING BEHIND HIS DESK, RESPONDING TO A FEW EMAILS. HE'S EXPECTING US, AND GREETES US ENTHUSIASTICALLY AS WE WALK IN. YOU MIGHT KNOW TODD AS A PROFESSOR IN THE COLLEGE OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION, BUT LAST YEAR HE TOOK ON A NEW ROLE.

(Music)

Peters: IN HIS OFFICE, TODD HAS A LOW, SLEEK BLACK LEATHER COUCH AND CHAIR THAT REFLECT THE SUNLIGHT STREAMING IN THROUGH THE WINDOW IN HIS OFFICE. IT FACES EAST, TREETOPS LIGHTLY SWAY IN THE WIND AND A BUSY UNIVERISTY AVENUE CAN BE SEEN JUST BEYOND THE BRANCHES.

Peters: HIS BLACK RIMMED GLASSES AND WHITE GOATEE ARE MEMORABLE, RECOGNIZABLE. BUT WHAT PEOPLE TAKE AWAY FROM MEETING TODD IS HIS Demeanor. HE REMINDS ME OF THAT MAYA ANGELOU QUOTE- THE ONE ABOUT HOW *people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.*

Peters: THAT'S TODD. HE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PROFESSOR THAT GOES THE EXTRA MILE FOR STUDENTS. IT'S THE REASON HE FOUND HIMSELF IN THIS NEW ROLE.

Todd Chambers, Assistant Vice Provost for Academic and Career Advising: The idea basically is to really meet students where they are and help them find sort of the pathway and get them connected to their college major and then also help them get connected with their career pathway as well.

Chambers: The Chronicle of Higher Education released a report about the future of advising in December. And I really feel like that that is where we are at Texas Tech. It's kind of like who we've always been. It's kind of been one of our core values.

(Music)

Peters: TODD HAS BEEN ON CAMPUS LONGER THAN HE'S BEEN ANYWHERE IN HIS LIFE. IN 1998, HE GRADUATED FROM TECH WITH A DEGREE IN JOURNALISM AND STAYED AROUND TO GET HIS MASTER'S IN MASS COMMUNICATIONS...

Chambers: Yeah, I grew up on a farm outside of Wellman, Texas. I went to Brownfield, you know, brownfield schools. So, I always grew up in the shadow of the double T and even though I looked at a couple of places, I came to Texas Tech, and it's been part of kind of the fabric of who I am for most of my entire adult life.

Peters: TODD SAYS TEXAS TECH HAS CHANGED A LOT, IT'S GROWN AND SHIFTED OVER THE LAST FEW DECADES, AND HE HAS HAD A FRONT ROW SEAT.

Chambers: We've got to think about the next generation of students... I think back to my experience, I came to Texas Tech in 1984... but it was one academic advisor and she served, you know, the entire population. And that was back in the day where you lined up and you had a card and you stood in line at then what was called the university center, and then you got up to the front and they said, well, that class is closed.

NO QUESTION, THERE WERE FEWER ADVISORS WHEN TODD WAS AT TEXAS TECH IN THE 80S. BUT TODAY, WE HAVE 136 AND THE GOAL IS TO GROW THAT NUMBER TO 150.

Peters: TODD'S APPROACH TO ADVISING IS THAT IT SHOULD BE CONSISTENT- WHETHER YOU'RE A TRADITIONAL COLLEGE STUDENT OR NOT. HE'S PUTTING A LOT OF EMPHASIS ON MAKING SURE ALL STUDENTS HAVE THE

SUPPORT OF AN ADVISOR- RECOGNIZING THAT SUPPORT MAY LOOK DIFFERENT BASED ON A STUDENT'S STATUS, LIKE THOSE WHO ARE WORKING TOWARD A DEGREE ONLINE.

Chambers: It's not our traditional 18-year-old to 24-year-old, you know, rather, it's a 31-year-old and they have different needs and different expectations. So, the advising experience has got to change. And so we're really building out something that hopefully when a student needs that touchpoint, we'll be able to provide them and meet them there, whether that is face to face. And so that's what we're building here.

Peters: TODD EMBODIES THAT THING WE'VE TALKED ABOUT BEFORE IN THIS PODCAST- PRESIDENT SCHOVANEC SAYS IT A LOT- HOW THE SUCCESS OF OUR CAMPUS WILL ALWAYS BE IN OUR PEOPLE.

Peters: IT WAS TRUE FOR TODD AS A TEXAS TECH STUDENT, THE SON OF A BORN AND RAISED FARMING FATHER WHO NEVER ATTENDED COLLEGE, AND A MOTHER WHO ATTENDED FOR JUST ONE SEMESTER.

Chambers: My very first semester here and my boss, Cindy Ontiveros. Cindy, we worked in the print shop of the then just the College of Business at Tech and I worked there all four years. And Cindy, I think is, probably represents part of the reason that I'm so, so passionate about Texas Tech.

THAT IS NEXT, ON FEARLESS.

(Music)

Glenys Young, Editor, Evermore Magazine: Hey there... it's Glenys Young, editor of Texas Tech's Evermore magazine... when we created Evermore, we wanted to do something different and unique. We wanted to share original stories in a completely original way. Our team is constantly pursuing the people who have been shaped by this University. And don't miss The chance to read about how Texas Tech is making *more* possible for people just like you. Get your copy by visiting today.ttu.edu/evermore.

(Walking into University Career Center)

Peters: ENTERING THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD CAN BE INTIMIDATING. YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'VE JUST SPENT THE LAST FEW YEARS LEARNING A SKILL. BUT PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE... WELL SOMETIMES ITS EASIER SAID THAN DONE. FORTUNATELY, TEXAS TECH HAS SPENT THE LAST 70 PLUS YEARS PERFECTING THE PROCESS OF PREPARATION.

Katie Perkins, Intern: Hi, how are you?

Jay Killough, Director, Texas Tech University Career Center: So, the Career Center started in 1948, I believe, with a director named Jean, she was a pioneer of her time, one of the first female directors amongst more of a man's world in career services.

Peters: JAY KILLOUGH HAS SPENT NEARLY TWO DECADES ON CAMPUS. HE'S A TECH GRAD... BUT AFTER WALKING THE STAGE WITH HIS UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE, HE LEFT FOR A WHILE TO FOLLOW BIG CITY DREAMS.

Killough: You know, I was on Music Row. I was in Nashville. I was like, this is it. And then it was not it.

Peters: IT WASN'T WHAT HE EXPECTED. JAY HAD A BIT OF A COME TO JESUS MEETING WITH HIS DAD WHO DELIVERED SOME VERY REAL, VERY DIRECT, WORDS.

Killough: And it's funny...He didn't even hesitate. He said, 'you need to be around people, I've seen where you work, I've seen your job... there's no, it's no surprise you're miserable.' And I was like, 'Thanks, appreciate that.'

Peters: HE RETURNED TO TECH AND WORKED AS A TOUR GUIDE IN ADMISSIONS, HE WAS ALSO TRAVELING AROUND THE STATE RECRUITING STUDENTS.

Killough: It was amazing. It was not, hey, I'm working for Clint Black, but it was, hey, I'm going to Plano East today. But it was fun. I wanted to get up and get out of bed to do that.

Peters: JAY FOUND HIS TRUE CALLING IN LIFE, THANKS TO THAT JOB AT THE RECORD LABEL. HE SAYS THAT TODAY IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS HE EVER DID. IT VALIDATED SOMETHING FOR HIM- THAT THERE'S A DIFFERENCE IN GETTING TO DO SOMETHING AND HAVING TO DO SOMETHING. JAY SAYS BEING PART OF A PERSON'S JOURNEY IS A PRIVILEGE, ESPECIALLY DURING YEARS AS FUNDAMENTAL AS COLLEGE. HE CHANNELS THAT ENERGY INTO THE CAREER CENTER.

(Music)

Killough: You just register at the bottom of the page.

Peters: Okay, access code...

Peters: OVER THE YEARS, IT HAS BECOME MORE ACCOMMODATING, EXPANDING SERVICES TO INCLUDE ALMOST EVERY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING THAT YOU MIGHT NEED. STARTING WITH A STUDENT'S FIRST SEMESTER ON CAMPUS.

Killough: A freshman comes in and says, 'I have no idea what I want to major in, or I thought I knew what I wanted to major in but now I'm not so sure.'

Peters: THEY CAN HELP WITH THAT.

Killough: What I always tell students, and this is just the way I teach it, is work interest assessment is going to be the most, its first, because it's going to be the most dominant.

Peters: SITTING IN PLUSH OFFICE CHAIRS AROUND A CONFERENCE TABLE, OUR SOUND ENGINEER THOMAS HAS LOGGED INTO A COMPUTER IN THE ROOM. I'M ON KP'S LAPTOP- YOU REMEMBER HER FROM THE PREVIOUS EPISODE- SHE'S OUR INTERN NOW... ANYWAY, JAY IS GUIDING US THROUGH SOME CAREER ASSESSMENT TESTS.

Killough: So, if you click on those hyperlinks and click on the occupation and you'll see some job tasks...

Peters: THESE TESTS HAVE HELPED STUDENTS UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES MORE AND MADE CHOOSING A MAJOR A LITTLE LESS OVERWHELMING. SO, WE WANTED TO TRY IT OUT OURSELVES...

Peters: Using mathematics or statistical methods to solve technical, scientific problems. I'm going to say no.

Peters: You can tell we work in a creative industry.

Thomas Boyd, Audio Engineer: What do you know? It says artistic, right.

Killough: And so that was the original kind of role with this. But basically, it boiled down to - everybody has these general six interests. The REASIC is realistic, investigative, artistic, social enterprise and conventional. And as you can see, Thomas, you're an ASR, artistic, you can see is very high almost to the 90, 90th percentile.

(Music)

Peters: JAY GOES THROUGH THE RESULTS WITH US... WE READ THROUGH EACH OF OUR STRENGTHS AND SKILL SETS. WE GET TO A PAGE THAT, BASED ON OUR OWN RESULTS, LISTS DOZENS OF DIFFERENT CAREERS THAT MATCH OUR INTEREST AND PASSIONS, IT SHOWS US WHAT COLLEGES AND MAJORS WILL HELP US GET TO THAT CAREER PATH. AFTER STUDENTS TAKE THEIR TEST, THEY'LL SIT DOWN WITH A CAREER COUNSELOR WHO CAN INTERPRET THIS INFORMATION AND PUT THEM ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

Boyd: I got a choreographer, disc jockey, radio and TV announcer, Radio and TV sports announcer...

Peters: So other options would be a chaplain, family caseworker, health educators, political science professor, recreational worker, religious institution, education coordinator, social worker. So, what are these icons here? Maybe a little looks like a....

Killough: That is a bright outlook. And so that means, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, that those occupations are growing. And so, there's a bright outlook for them in the future.

Peters: I HAVE TO SAY, THIS IS PRETTY ON BRAND. FOR THE RECORD, WE TOOK THIS TEST STRICTLY FOR PODCAST PURPOSES, I LOVE MY JOB AND SO DOES THOMAS. WE'RE NOT LOOKING TO MAKE A CAREER CHANGE... BUT IF YOU'RE AN ALUM AND YOU ARE LOOKING FOR THAT, YOU'RE IN LUCK. JAY, AND HIS TEAM, THEY WORK A LOT WITH FORMER STUDENTS WHO ARE CHANGING THEIR CAREER PATHS LATER IN LIFE. OR EVEN RETIRED INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE LOOKING FOR A PART TIME JOB. THEY ALSO HAVE RESUME CRITIQUES AND MOCK INTERVIEWS WITH STAFF, WHICH ARE PRETTY INVOLVED. A LOT GOES INTO MAKING A MOCK INTERVIEW AS REALISTIC AS POSSIBLE.

Killough: If it's a panel interview, if it's a Zoom interview, if it's a phone, you know, we will ask students what kind of interview you're going on. Let's mimic that. We also have Quinnia, which is our artificial intelligence interviewing.

Peters: QUINN IS SORT OF NEW TO THE TEAM.

(Music)

Quinn: Tell us about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation.

Perkins: In one of my recent classes, it was a portfolio and professional...

Peters: KP GOT HER OVERALL RESULTS IN AN EMAIL ABOUT 10 MINUTES AFTER THE INTERVIEW ENDED. IT'S DETAILED, INCLUDING PAGES OF CHARTS, GRAPHS AND MAPS WITH FEEDBACK. SHE WAS FLAGGED FOR A FEW THINGS- TALKING TOO FAST, NOT MAKING ENOUGH EYE CONTACT. IT SHOWS THAT 25% OF THE TIME HER EYES AVERTED THE CAMERA. THE RESULTS SHOW THAT SHE SPOKE MORE THAN 1500 WORDS IN TOTAL AND USED 32 FILLER WORDS. QUINN SAID KP NEEDED MORE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES IN HER ANSWERS AND THAT SHE NEEDED TO INCLUDE MORE OF HER PAST EXPERIENCES AND HOW THEY'VE IMPACTED HER FUTURE ASPIRATIONS.

Peters: BUT OVERALL, QUINN WAS IMPRESSED. COMMENTS READ THINGS LIKE 'NICE! YOU'RE PERFORMING ABOVE AVERAGE' WITH A LITTLE ICON. WHEN YOU CLICK ON IT, IT TELLS KP THAT HER ANALYTICAL COMMUNICATION IS STRONG. THIS MEANS, SHE'S A GOOD STORYTELLER, NO SURPRISE THERE.

Peters: SHE ALSO RANKED ON THE HIGH END OF ENTHUSIASM FOR EVERY ANSWER.

Perkins: The reality of me having to do an online interview is very real and very possibly close and I just don't know it yet. So, yeah I think I could definitely practice with this.

Peters: But it is weird though.

Perkins: It is super weird.

Peters: WEIRD OR NOT... MORE AND MORE BUSINESSES ARE TURNING TO AI TO FILTER OUT FIRST-ROUND APPLICANTS. SO, THE PROBABILITY THAT RECENT GRADUATES WILL AT SOME POINT ENCOUNTER THIS TYPE OF JOB INTERVIEW IS STEADILY INCREASING.

Killough: All these other AI sites are really going to change the landscape of higher ed and it's both fascinating and a bit concerning. You know what it could be. But I had a coworker actually explain it. Their view on it was, it's basically like the calculator was years ago, decades ago, that people were afraid nobody's going to learn math anymore because... we still learn math, but we have this tool now to enhance it. The same thing with AI. It's a tool that we can use to enhance things, but it still requires a person to code it. It requires a person to build it. You know, there's going to be a lot of new jobs in technology around it.

Peters: IT'S SIMPLE FOR JAY- ENCOURAGING STUDENTS TO USE THEIR RESOURCES TO ENHANCE THEIR SKILLS. 10 YEARS AGO, A LOT OF US COULD HAVE NEVER IMAGINED THE CURRENT TECHNOLOGICAL AGE THAT WE'RE IN. AND HOW ACCESSIBLE THESE ADVANCES HAVE BECOME.

Killough: I'm fulfilled because of the turnover of students, just to be honest, there's constantly a new group of students every semester, there's new people to meet, there's new people to introduce to this city, to this university, to our facilities, to our resources... and so those kinds of opportunities wouldn't exist other places. And so, at a university like this, it's encouraged.

(Music)

Peters: So, tell me about your, what are some of the earliest experiences that you have at Tech?

Kim Brannan: Well.

Cindy Ontiveros: Before she started as an employee?

Taylor: Yeah.

Brannan: It's like, do you want to really go back that far?

KIM AND CINDY SIT ACROSS THE TABLE FROM US. WE'RE CHATTING IN A ROOM INSIDE THE RAWLS COLLEGE OF BUSINESS.

Brannan: Since my mom worked at the College of Business back in the day, I basically was in the Rawls college from the point I was nine years old on. They won't give me credit for that. But, you know.

Ontiveros: She's tried.

Kim: I've tried.

Peters: KIM GREW UP ON THIS CAMPUS BY WAY OF HER MOM, WHO SPENT DECADES WORKING HERE IN A COUPLE OF DIFFERENT ROLES WITHIN THE COLLEGE.

Ontiveros: A lot of times I had no choice because I'm a single parent and, you know, it was either bring her or find somebody to keep her. And I had just moved here so other than my brother and sister-in-law, I didn't know enough people to impose upon. So here she came along, which worked out great because a lot of the student assistants I hired I used as babysitters if I wanted to go somewhere.

Peters: WORK-LIFE BALANCE WOULD LOOK LIKE THIS FOR YEARS; IT WAS A NEW KIND OF FAMILY AFFAIR.

(Music)

Ontiveros: He came in one afternoon after I had already left work and the girl that worked for me said, 'I've got somebody that's applied for a student assistant position. And I told him, 'Come back in the morning.' And how could you not hire him? I mean, this kid's irresistible you know, he's got a great personality, got along with everybody was great, was always there. And if he wasn't there on time, he always came with the box of donuts. This was his excuse for being late, but that's just Todd, you know.

EVEN BACK THEN, TODD CHAMBERS SEEMED TO ALWAYS KNOW HOW TO MAKE AN IMPACT.

Ontiveros: Like I said, he came in the door that first day and you just know that he's somebody special. I just think he's part of the family.

Chambers: I mean, she became a second mom, right? Here she was someone that was my boss, ran a print shop. But over time... she's been part of my life.

Ontiveros: I had a lot of great student assistants over the years. Many of them I still know about or know where they are. Keep in touch occasionally. But Todd was just special, so I really have kept a lot closer with him than I have any of the others.

Peters: CINDY WOULD BE THERE THROUGH THE FINISH LINE OF TODD'S STUDENT EXPERIENCE AT TECH. SHE WOULD MAKE IT A POINT NOT TO MISS THE BIG THINGS.

Ontiveros: As a matter of fact, when he got his bachelor's degree, I was supposed to be going home that day to visit my mother, who lived in Arkansas. And he said, aren't you coming to my graduation? I said, 'Sure.' So, I changed my plans, stayed for his graduation, but I couldn't miss these things. Yeah, I've been with him for a long time.

Peters: It WAS A LONG TIME THAT BROUGHT A LOT OF LIFE. KIM AND CINDY CONTINUED TO LOVE THIS CAMPUS. WHEN CINDY GOT REMARRIED YEARS AGO... THE PICTURES FROM THE SMALL CEREMONY SHOW HER KIDS, HER NEW HUSBAND AND TODD. TO THIS DAY, HE REMAINS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE LEGACY THAT CINDY LEFT IN HER MANY YEARS AT TEXAS TECH. SHE INVESTED IN HIM, IN HIS PERSONAL LIFE, AND TAUGHT HIM SOMETHING VALUABLE ABOUT MENTORSHIP. HER WORK ON CAMPUS BECAME MORE THAN A JOB, IT WAS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS.

Chambers: I'm pretty passionate about what we do at Tech because I believe that the grit and determination that we have in West Texas, I believe that passes over and I go back to really I really I believe because as I see it on a daily basis, the Cindy Ontiveros, Cindy still here and she's in all of us.

Peters: CINDY RETIRED IN 2009. PASSING THE BATON TO KIM, WHO CONTINUES TO SERVE THE RAWLS COLLEGE WITH THE SAME ATTITUDE AND APPRECIATION SHE WATCHED HER MOM GIVE AS SHE HERSELF NOW APPROACHES 30 YEARS OF EMPLOYMENT AT TEXAS TECH.

Ontiveros: Yeah. You're not just part of the college. You're a part of the university.

Brannan: And everybody wants to be valued in what they do and as long as you appreciate everyone and show them the courtesy that they are appreciated then it's great.

Ontiveros: Like you have to wonder how many people that you have had an impact on that you never know that you never realized that you made an impact on it because, you know, they're out there. You know you have.

(Music)

Peters: YOU KNOW SOMETHING THAT I APPRECIATE ABOUT WORKING ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS IS THAT THERE ARE SO MANY STORIES LIKE THIS ONE – SO MANY STAFF MEMBERS LIKE CINDY AND STUDENTS LIKE TODD, WHO FORM THOSE MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS – THE KIND THAT PROPEL STUDENTS TO GRADUATION AND MOTIVATE STAFF TO CONTINUE THEIR WORK AS THE SEMESTERS CHANGE WITH THE SEASONS – FALL TO SPRING... TO FALL AGAIN. THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP AT TECH WILL SAY IT A LOT – WE WANT TO MAKE SURE STUDENTS COME HERE AND GRADUATE – AND NOT ONLY GRADUATE BUT THEY DO SO QUICKLY, SO THEY CAN MINIMIZE THEIR DEBT. WHAT'S LOST IN THAT STATEMENT, THOUGH, IS THE PERSONAL – THE "INTANGIBLES" THAT MAKE TEXAS TECH WHAT IT IS. AND SO OFTEN, IT'S THE ACADEMIC ADVISORS WHO PROVIDE *THAT* – AND MUCH MORE.

IN THE FALL OF 20-22, TODD WAS NAMED THE ASSISTANT VICE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC AND CAREER ADVISING. HE'S INSPIRED BY HELPING STUDENTS AND HOLDS A LOT OF STOCK IN HOW WE DO THAT. TODD TELLS US ABOUT A QUOTE FROM THE FORMER PRESIDENT AT HARVARD...

Chambers: ...and he talks about how that good advising is probably the single most underestimated characteristic of a successful college experience.

AND SO OFTEN, IT'S THE ACADEMIC ADVISORS – YOU KNOW, THOSE PEOPLE CHARACTERIZED BY THE FORMER HARVARD PRESIDENT AS THE MOST UNDERESTIMATED PART OF THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE – THEY PROVIDE THAT... AND SO MUCH MORE.

(Music)

FEARLESS IS PRODUCED BY THE TEXAS TECH OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING. IT'S HOSTED AND WRITTEN BY ME, TAYLOR PETERS, AND CO-PRODUCED BY ALLISON HIRTH. THOMAS BOYD IS OUR AUDIO ENGINEER- HE DOES SOUND DESIGN AND EDITS THIS PODCAST. AND IF YOU'D LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CHARACTERS THAT WE TALKED ABOUT IN THIS EPISODE, GO TO TODAY.TTU.EDU SLASH FEARLESS AND DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA.

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