



## Season 3 | Episode Six | Finding The Future

(Crowded room)

Taylor Peters, Host: EVERY SPRING, RECRUITING SEASON IS IN FULL SWING. CALLING ALL CAMPUS TOUR GUIDES AND COLLEGE RECRUITERS TO ACTION- IN LUBBOCK, IN DALLAS, SAN ANTONIO, AUSTIN, HOUSTON...

(Busy, crowded room with speaker)

Peters: NOT ALL PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS GET A CHANCE TO VISIT CAMPUS. SO, WITH EVENTS LIKE THIS ONE, WE TAKE TECH TO YOU.

THIS IS EPISODE SIX- FINDING THE FUTURE.

Peters: IT'S FEBRUARY AND THE SUB IS SWARMING WITH FUTURE STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES. LINES HAVE FORMED DOWN ALMOST EVERY HALL AND STAIRCASE IN THE BUILDING. HUNDREDS OF TENNIS SHOED FEET MOVE THROUGH THE ATRIUM ON THE FIRST FLOOR, HANDS CLUTCHING RED, SHINY BAGS THAT READ IN BLACK BOLD LETTERS 'CONNECT TECH'. EVERYONE IS BEING DIRECTED BY REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE SUB AND UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS, LIKE MASON SEYL.

Mason Seyl, Assistant Director of Operations for the Visitors Center: There are 1500 registered here. That includes guests.

Peters: HE'S THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS FOR THE VISITORS CENTER – PART OF UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS ... MEANING THAT TODAY HE IS ONE BUSY GUY. MASON SAYS THAT 1500 IS THE MOST GUESTS THEY'VE EVER HAD.

Seyl: Check-in is, right now, at the matador room. So, check-in is happening in the matador room and then they're going to have two dualling presentations. So, Jason is going to start in the ballroom...

Peters: AMAZINGLY, I FIND AN EMPTY SEAT IN THE ATRIUM. I'M TRYING TO STAY OUT OF THE WAY AND TAKING IT ALL IN WHEN THE GALYEAN FAMILY JOINS ME. THEY'RE HERE FROM CHINA SPRINGS, THEIR SON NOLAN SAYS TECH WAS HIS FIRST CHOICE. HIS OLDER SISTER PLANS TO STAY AT TECH AND GET HER MASTERS... NOLAN IS A LEGACY; DAD SAYS THE CAMPUS HAS CHANGED A LOT SINCE HIS TIME AS A STUDENT 30 YEARS AGO. HIS OLD RESIDENCE HALL IS LONG GONE BUT CAMPUS STILL FEELS FAMILIAR, WELCOMING.

Presenter: Morning guys, we've got some open seats over here to the left of the ballroom over here.

Peters: THERE'S JUST ENOUGH TIME TO GRAB A DONUT AND COFFEE BEFORE WE GET GOING.

Presenter: We have a big group here to today so I kind of want to get a sense of where everybody is from? If you're from the Dallas Fort Worth area, will you raise your hand? Woo, lots of DFW...

Peters: EVERY YEAR, THERE ARE A LOT OF RECRUITING EVENTS ON CAMPUS – TWO SELECT TECH'S, TWO CONNECT TECH'S (WHICH IS WHAT TODAY IS), TWO TRANSFER DAYS AND ONE BIG PREVIEW DAY IN THE FALL. I KNOW... UNDERGRADUATE ADMISSIONS, IT'S A LOT OF WORK. FIRST IMPRESSIONS CAN COUNT FOR A LOT. THE FIRST TIME YOU TALK WITH A RECRUITER OR GET A LETTER IN THE MAIL, THE FIRST TIME YOU GET TO ATTEND AN EVENT IN YOUR HOMETOWN, OR NEAR IT. AND ESPECIALLY THE FIRST TIME YOU STEP FOOT ON CAMPUS.

(Music)

Peters: IN THE LOBBY OF WEST HALL, A SMATTERING OF PEOPLE GATHER QUIETLY, SCROLLING THROUGH THEIR PHONES, AWAITING INSUTRUCTION. SOME YOUNG PEOPLE ARE ON THEIR OWN OR WITH A FRIEND OR SIBLING. OTHERS ARE STANDING BETWEEN PEOPLE WHO SHARE THEIR HEIGHT, THEIR NOSE, THEIR EYES. PARENTS WHO ARE REALIZING THAT THIS IS REALLY HAPPENING, THEIR KIDS WILL SOON BECOME COLLEGE STUDENTS, THE STEPPING STONE TO ADULTHOOD. IT'S EXCITING AND NOSTALGIC. AND A LITTLE BIT SCARY.

Ashley Pena: Can I get anyone water? Do I have three families who would be willing to join my friend Sahil on the podcast recording tour?

Peters: THAT'S ASHLEY PENA... SHE'S THE VISITOR'S CENTER MANAGER. WE, OF COURSE, ARE THE PODCAST SHE'S REFERRING TO.

Pena: Alright, perfect! So, our tour guides here today are with a group called President's Select but I will let them introduce themselves.

Sahil Tonk, President's Select tour guide: My name is Sahil Tonk, I'm a senior microbiology and general studies major originally from Lubbock, Texas.

Shelby, President's Select tour guide: Hi, guys, my name is Shelby. I'm a junior kinesiology major and I'm also from Lubbock.

Cory, President's Select tour guide: My name is I'm Cory, I'm a sophomore Kinesiology major and I'm also from Lubbock.

Pena: They're not normally all from Lubbock, I promise! But you've got the best of the best here today...

(Music)

Peters: I CHAT WITH A PROSPECTIVE STUDENT AND HER MOM AS WE WALK THROUGH MEMORIAL CIRCLE. ASHLEY HANGS BACK A BIT AND I FIND HER TALKING WITH ANOTHER FAMILY.

Pena: Especially like, as she gets to her junior/senior year, you're really going to see a lot of those, you know, 25-30 person classes...

Peters: THEY'RE ASKING ASHLEY ABOUT CLASS SIZES. THEY HAVE A DAUGHTER THAT ATTENDS A LARGE SCHOOL IN FLORIDA. THEY SAY THAT SHE HAS TOLD THEM HORROR STORIES ABOUT 600 STUDENT LECTURES AT THAT UNIVERSITY. SAYING THAT SHE ALMOST FAILED A FEW OF THEM AND THEY WANT TO KNOW THAT TECH WON'T BE THE SAME.

Pena: It's just more so those freshman or sophomore courses where you're gonna be in those large lecture halls.

Prospective student: Okay, but as long as there's tutoring.

Peters: ASHLEY TAKES THIS TIME TO TELL THEM ABOUT SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION, A RESOURCE WE'VE TOLD YOU ABOUT IN AN EARLIER EPISODE. SHE TELLS THEM ABOUT THE TUTORIALS OFFERED BY THE COLLEGE, STUDY GROUPS, AND HELP ON BLACKBOARD. THIS SEEMS TO SETTLE HER AND HER PARENTS. ASHLEY HAS BEEN IN THESE CONVERSATIONS AND THESE CLASSROOMS BEFORE.

Peters: Are you from here originally?

Pena: I'm not, I'm originally from South Texas.

Peters: Okay, oh, yeah, you said that earlier with the humidity. How did you end up here?

Pena: So, I actually went to the road show in McAllen. And President Guy Bailey was the president at the time. And he took time to sit with me and my mom, 1-on-1 and he really just changed that whole interaction for me. He introduced me to representatives from Human Sciences and taught me about their community, family addictions program, which is really on brand with what I wanted to do, and no other university had had something in that realm for me.

Peters: And it's not a coincidence to me that your experience at a Road Show has led to your experience of recruiting the next generation of students, right?

Pena: Yeah. Like I know the impact it had on me. Especially coming from a really poor community, an underserved community. Being 9 hours from home for the last 10 years has been really hard but knowing how I can connect with other, you know, students from the Valley, being able share that experience and sharing that you can leave your family, you can be here.

Peters: ASHLEY IS ONE OF THE IMPORTANT PIECES OF A STUDENT'S FIRST IMPRESSION. IT'S A LOT SOMETIMES- FEELING LIKE YOU HAVE TO BE ON ALL THE TIME. YOU MIGHT GIVE THE SAME TOUR, HAVE THE SAME CONVERSATIONS MULTIPLE TIMES A DAY WITH DIFFERENT PEOPLE... BUT FOR THEM, IT'S EXACTLY WHAT THEY MIGHT NEED TO FEEL AT EASE, TO FEEL UNDERSTOOD, TO FEEL EDUCATED. IT HELPS THEM IN THE PROCESS OF DISCOVERING IF THIS IS THEIR FUTURE.

Pena: I actually was talking to my best friend the other day and she said... I was talking about the tour guides and kind of what we're doing with them, and she was like... Actually, the whole reason she was sold on Texas Tech, she's local to Lubbock, the whole reason she was sold on Texas Tech was because of her experience with her tour guide.

Peters: SHE APPRECIATES STORIES LIKE THIS ONE. IT'S MOTIVATING. IT REMINDS HER THAT THE DETAILS DO MATTER... THAT SMALL INTERACTIONS CAN LEAD TO BIG THINGS. THAT'S SOMETHING JAMIE HANSARD KNOWS WELL.

Allison Hirth: You mentioned recruitment right off the top when you said what enrollment management is?

Peters: THIS IS ALLISON, BY THE WAY.

Hirth: Can you talk about Texas Tech's strategy towards recruitment?

Jamie Hansard, Vice President, Enrollment Management: Yeah, great question. So, I would definitely say that our, our recruitment strategy has evolved over the last 17 years. You know, as we began to look towards the future and think about what, you know, how did we want to grow? Where did we want to grow? We became very strategic in conversations.

Peters: JAMIE TALKS ABOUT THE LAST 17 YEARS, THAT'S HOW LONG SHE HAS WORKED AT TECH. SHE OVERSEES ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT AT TEXAS TECH. SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY HAVE ALLOWED HER TEAM TO CONNECT WITH PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS, TO GET TEXAS TECH ON THEIR RADAR EARLIER THAN EVER.

Hansard: As students move through their high school career, and then they start to really think about what their future looks like. We become more involved in that process, and we are more inclusive across the campus community to include our academic colleges, our auxiliaries services. You know, every point that touches a student, we include them in the recruitment process.

Peters: JAMIE AND HER ENTIRE TEAM HAVE PUT IN COUNTLESS HOURS REFINING THIS PROCESS. SHE SAYS THEY'VE REALIZED THAT MUST START RECRUITING EARLIER. YEARS AGO, UNIVERSITIES WOULD GET INVOLVED THE SUMMER BETWEEN JUNIOR AND SENIOR YEAR.

Hansard: Now we've backed it up into their sophomore year and, and we will, will eventually begin to start very, very direct conversations with freshman in high school.

Peters: THEY'RE STILL DOING THIS WITH THE CLASSIC PRINT MAILERS THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE RECEIVED FROM COLLEGES. BUT THEY'RE ALSO TAKING ADVANTAGE OF EMAIL AND SOCIAL MEDIA TO GENERATE AS MUCH COMMUNICATION AS POSSIBLE.

Hansard: So, for example, to communicate and recruit, really the class of 2022, we sent out almost 20 million emails just for that one class. Now, even if you look at 2020 to see how many... we doubled, it was 11 million in 2020. But what we've learned in the last three years is that that is what students and families want. They want more communication. You know, before COVID, it was we really need to be very mindful when we're communicating. We don't want to overcommunicate because that will turn families off. But really, what's happened in the last three years is that I don't think we can communicate enough. Parents and families want to hear from us weekly, students want to hear from us. And so, it's just a very, very different process now.

Peters: THE FALL OF 2022 SAW RECORD ENROLLMENT IN FIRST YEAR STUDENTS. THE EFFORTS OF JAMIE AND HER TEAM PAID OFF AND IT VALIDATED THAT THEY WERE ON THE RIGHT TRACK. AS PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES ARE WANTING MORE, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THEY GOT.

Hansard: We have been on this, you know, very dramatic increase of student enrollment. And so now I think Texas Tech is at a place that we're looking at growth with a purpose. But I think we need to be really intentional about what areas we want to grow in and where that is.

Peters: FOR JAMIE, THAT LOOKS LIKE CONTINUED GROWTH IN FIRST YEAR ENROLLMENT. BUT ALSO EXPANDING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A NONTRADITIONAL STUDENT POPULATION THAT IS TRENDING UPWARD.

Hansard: And so, we're being very intentional and looking at what, what can Texas Tech offer the adult learner and what do our online education opportunities look like? And, you know, and I'm really excited about that.

Peters: JAMIE IS ANOTHER PERSON WHO SAYS HER COLLEGE EXPERIENCE IS WHAT SHAPED HER LIFE, AND THAT'S WHY SHE'S FOCUSED ON FINDING THE FUTURE. SHE WANTS TO MAKE SURE PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS SEE THAT THE SAME OPPORTUNITY IS ALREADY THEIRS. THAT THEY CAN CLAIM OWNERSHIP OF THEIR EDUCATION AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT, THAT THEY CAN SEE THEIR LIFE OPEN UP AS A RESULT OF EDUCATION OR MENTORSHIP OR COMMUNITY.

(Music)

Peters: WE'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

Allan Ramsey: Hi, my name is Allen Ramsey, and I am a writer in the Office of Communications and Marketing. I believe that there are few things more meaningful than the opportunity to share a person's story. It's a privilege and one that, as storytellers, we don't take lightly. There are so many ways that people on our campus are doing work that could change our society, even our world. In season two of Fearless, we took you on a journey of how researchers are doing just that. It was those stories that inspired a new series we're calling Foundations. It's simple. Foundations is a round table conversation between researchers in different fields gathered to talk about important issues that impact all of us. You can watch Foundations on our YouTube Channel. Just search Texas Tech University.

(Music)

Christiana Christofides, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Texas Tech Online: Hi, Thomas...

Peters: And Katie Perkins...

Christofides: I think I've seen your name somewhere before...

Peters: CHRISTIANA CHRISTOFIDES IS THE DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC INITIATIVES... IT'S UNDER THE PERVIEW OF TEXAS TECH ONLINE. SHE GOES BY CHRIS.

Peters: SHE'S ON THE FIFTH FLOOR OF AN OFFICE BUILDING OVERLOOKING UNIVERSITY AND 19<sup>TH</sup> STREET. A SIGN ON HER DESK READS 'SARCASM IS JUST ONE SERVICE I OFFER.' NEXT TO IT, THERE'S A FRAMED, SOMEWHAT BLURRY PHOTO OF A GIRL ON A HORSE JUMPING OVER A WHITE FENCE. IT'S HER AS A TEENAGER. SHE TELLS US SHE WAS ON THE JUNIOR OLYMPIC EQUESTRIAN TEAM YEARS AGO. TODAY, SHE'S A TEAM LEADING, FORMER LAW PRACTICING, SELF PROCLAIMED PIT BULL WHEN IT COMES TO ADVOCATING FOR STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION. A HUGE PART OF HER RESPONSIBILITY IS NEGOTIATING AND MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TECH AND OTHER ACADEMIC PARTNERS ACROSS THE STATE.

Christofides: My previous career was in law. So, I have that sort of advocacy bone in my body, and she told me what was happening...

Peters: SHE'S IN THE MIDDLE OF TELLING US THIS STORY OF A JUNIOR COLLEGE STUDENT. THE STUDENT IS PART OF THIS TEXAS TECH PROGRAM THAT EASILY TRANSFERS HOURS FROM CERTAIN JUNIOR COLLEGES TO TECH. THERE'S A CONTENTIOUS CONVERSATION HAPPENING ABOUT A STUDENT BEING SHORT ON HOURS TO GRADUATE.

Christofides: ... and I immediately picked up the phone and called the provost of this community college and told them, I said, You're in violation of our agreement. I said, "this agreement stands because students trust the agreement."

Peters: THE STUDENT'S ADVISOR IS THE ONE WHO SAID THEY DIDN'T HAVE THE CREDITS. THE STUDENT REACHES OUT TO CHRIS IN AN ABSOLUTE PANIC.

Christofides: And it was probably a tense 24 hours with this student emailing me every hour because they had their entire family coming for graduation and they were told they wouldn't be able to graduate. Well, the provost overturned the adviser's decision AND let the student graduate because they had followed our crosswalk.

(Music)

Peters: SHE HAD SETTLED THE SCORE... THE STUDENT GOT WHAT THEY'D WORKED FOR. LOOK, THIS STORY DOESN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH WHY WE'RE IN HER OFFICE RIGHT NOW. WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT THAT STUDENT IN THIS EPISODE OF THE PODCAST. BUT IT WAS THE FIRST STORY SHE SHARED WHEN WE SAT DOWN AND I FEEL LIKE IT TOLD ME SOMETHING ABOUT CHRIS. I LIKE HER. HER FAMILY MOVED HERE FROM THE COUNTRY OF CYPRUS WHEN SHE WAS YOUNG, SHE WORKED HARD TO BE A SUCCESSFUL STUDENT AND IT PAID OFF. SHE HAS ALWAYS BEEN SOMEONE THAT WANTS TO SEE THE UNDERDOG RISE UP.

Christofides: That's why this program is so special is because there are dual credit programs all over the United States. I mean, this is not new, right? This is the only dual credit program that is with a four-year institution. Most of the time they're with a community college.

Peters: SHE'S TALKING ABOUT EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL, OR ECHS, THAT IS WHY WE'RE HERE. IT'S A TECH PROGRAM THAT ALLOWS ESTACADO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS – ONE OF FOUR HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE LUBBOCK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT – TO TAKE COLLEGE CLASSES AND ACCRUE CREDITS.

Christofides: Early college high school is only available for areas that are economically disadvantaged or socially challenged in some way.

Peters: SHE TELLS US THAT'S WHY THIS PROGRAM LIVES ONLY AT ESTACADO. LISD MARKETS THIS PROGRAM HEAVILY, STARTING IN MIDDLE SCHOOL, TO GENERATE AS MUCH ATTENTION AS POSSIBLE.

Christofides: They can earn up to 60 hours in this program. Most of them earn around like 40 to 50. But if they were starting to take advantage of it as a freshman, it would be 60 hours.

Peters: That's crazy!

Christofides: Which is 50% of your degree.

Cody Lass, Early College High School Teacher, Estacado High School: So, when you come to Tech, you take history 2300 and 2301. I teach those to the sophomores that we have on campus at Estacado.

Peters: THIS IS CODY LASS.

Lass: Teaching high school kids is different because by the time you get to the university, you're sort of on your path. You sort of know what you're going to do, what you plan to do, who you are. High school is totally different.

Peters: FOR THE LAST 6 YEARS, CODY HAS BEEN AN ECHS HISTORY TEACHER AT ESTACADO. WE MEET WITH HIM ON THE TEXAS TECH CAMPUS AFTER A LONG WRITING SESSION IN THE LIBRARY. HE'S FINISHING UP HIS DISSERTATION.

Lass: Since I've been there, I've realized that one of the things that I think that I love the most is that you have the opportunity to have a little bit more of an impact on students. With this early college program specifically, you get to introduce students to things that- because of a whole bunch of different reasons and background and family situations, whatever, they may not have ever been exposed to the things that they get to be exposed to in the early college program. They may have never thought...

Peters: ECHS IS WHAT BROUGHT CODY TO ESTACADO IN THE FIRST PLACE, BUT WHAT HAS KEPT HIM THERE IS SOMETHING ENTIRELY DIFFERENT.

Lass: There's a whole bunch of great kids that go to school over there, and I don't always know if they get a fair shake.

(Music)

Peters: CAN WE JUST TAKE A MINUTE TO CELEBRATE AND APPRECIATE TEACHERS EVERYWHERE? IT'S AN HONORABLE PROFESSION THAT DOESN'T ALWAYS GET THE CREDIT IT DESERVES. CODY IS SOMEONE WHO HAS SEEN TOO MANY STUDENT SUCCESS STORIES TO COUNT. HE'S ONE THAT SHOWS UP FOR HIS STUDENTS ON THE BASKETBALL COURT, OR IN THE CONCERT HALL AS WELL AS IN THE CLASSROOM.

Lass: I think that the more that they can get exposed to, the better, whether that be opening up new opportunities for them or putting them in situations where when they get to campus, wherever it ends up being, it's not as new. I've taught freshmen here on campus where, you know, you walk into class and you can sort of see the deer in the headlights look. It takes a little while for that to wear off and so, if our kids get exposed to a lot of the things that comes with a college campus, maybe that makes it less likely that they're sort of those same freshmen walking into class, not really sure what to expect.

(Music)

Jaden Garrett-Salter: Yeah. Okay, cool. My name is Jaden Salter. I am a senior and I am a creative writing major.

Peters: JADEN LIKES TO EMBRACE THE CHAOS- SHE'S A WIFE AND A MOM, PART-OWNER OF A LOCAL NON-PROFIT THAT HELPS GIVE RESOURCES TO YOUNG PARENTS, SHE'S A COLLEGE STUDENT, A SMALL BUSINESS OWNER... YOU CAN FIND HER SELLING HANDMADE CANDLES AT THE LOCAL FARMERS MARKET. WHEN SHE'S NOT DOING ALL THESE OTHER THINGS, SHE'S ACTIVE IN HER CREATIVE WRITING PROGRAM AT TECH, EVEN SERVED AS A SPEAKER AT A CONFERENCE RECENTLY. HER COLLEGE CAREER WAS PUT ON THE FAST TRACK WHEN SHE WAS A STUDENT AT ESTACADO, THANKS TO ECHS.

Garrett-Salter: I earned 64 credit hours and so essentially, I was able to get all of the basic college classes like over done with for free.

Peters: 64 HOURS! SHE GOT THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT WHILE SHE WAS IN SCHOOL. I MEAN, SERIOUSLY... CAN YOU IMAGINE? JADEN SAW AN OPPORTUNITY AND SHE JUMPED AT IT.

Garrett-Salter: The classwork and, like, the workload was actually a lot more than I thought it was. So, I think that that was what helped me shift into like a regular college setting, is that I was prepared for like the actual, like increase in, content and like the difficulty of the content that I would be studying.

Peters: I ASKED JADEN ABOUT THE PEOPLE THAT PLAYED A ROLE IN HER DEVELOPMENT IN HIGH SCHOOL THROUGH ECHS... HER COUNSELORS TANNA RODRIGUEZ AND STEPHEN TALBERT... THEY'RE BOTH RETIRED NOW... BUT SHE STILL KEEPS IN TOUCH THEM. SHE ALSO TALKS REGULARLY TO MS. BROWN, AND TICIA EDWARDS, LINDSEY TEETS, SHANNON WALTON AND SANDI HANSEN. THEY, LIKE CODY LASS, WORK EVERY DAY TO GIVE OTHER STUDENTS THE SAME CHANCES THAT JADEN SAYS SHAPED HER LIFE.

Garrett-Salter: I don't think that I would have been as successful as I was without them because I did struggle a lot with like various things in high school. And so, they were really there to kind of push me in the right direction.

Garrett-Salter: JADAN IS AN ECHS STORY WORTH SHARING. SHE GRADUATED FROM ESTACADO IN 2020 AND AFTER HIGH SCHOOL SHE GREW UP A LOT.

Garrett-Salter: So, it was like a bunch of things all at once that like 19-year-old me was trying to figure out. And so, I think that that was probably the biggest transition, was trying to like, find my place especially since I was doing college nontraditionally.

Peters: THERE IS SO MUCH ABOUT HER STORY THAT FALLS INTO THAT NONTRADITIONAL CATEGORY - STARTING COLLEGE AS A 19-YEAR-OLD JUNIOR ESSENTIALLY, THE FACT THAT SHE BALANCES A FAMILY ON TOP OF IT ALL, AND SHE'S EXCLUSIVELY ONLINE.

So, I have been very grateful for the online community that I have found at Tech because obviously I don't live here, so I don't participate a lot like on campus, but I also haven't felt like I needed to. I have still been rewarded just by being online.

Peters: HER FAMILY LIVES JUST OUTSIDE OF LUBBOCK IN A SMALL RURAL TOWN, THEY WANTED A GREAT SCHOOL FOR THEIR SON, THE HOUSING MARKET WAS AFFORDABLE, IT'S SECLUDED. AND TEXAS TECH EMPOWERS JADEN TO HAVE ALL OF THAT.

(Music)

Peters: TEXAS TECH RECRUITING CASTS A WIDE NET- IT AIMS TO CAPTURE THE ATTENTION OF STUDENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY, IT MARKETS HEAVILY IN HOTBED AREAS THROUGHOUT TEXAS... BUT IT ALSO HELPS LUBBOCK STUDENTS DISCOVER A WHOLE NEW WORLD IN THEIR OWN HOMETOWN. JADEN SAYS THAT SHE'S DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO TEXAS TECH AND THE ECHS PROGRAM THAT OPENED SO MANY DOORS FOR HER. SHE SAYS THEY BOTH GAVE HER EVERYTHING SHE WAS LOOKING FOR. AND IT'S HELPED HER BECOME THE COLLEGE STUDENT SHE IS TODAY.

(Music)

Lass: You realize that history is sort of the vehicle to teaching them a whole bunch of other things, and that can be way more useful to them when they leave my classroom than, you know, what happened on a certain day or who did what or whatever. You guys know the skills that you need to be successful in college. Those things will serve them after they leave high school, while they're on campus, after they graduate, into their profession. And so those are the things that hopefully, as a teacher that they take, take with them.

Peters: CODY AND CHRIS SAY MOST YEARS THEY MIGHT START WITH 60 OR 70 STUDENTS, AT LEAST HALF OF THEM WILL CONTINUE THE PROGRAM THROUGH GRADUATION. CHRIS HAS WORKED IN HIGHER EDUCATION FOR 17 YEARS BUT FALL 2023 IS HER FIRST IN THIS ROLE. SHE HAS HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR THIS ECHS PROGRAM AND SHE IS DETERMINED TO HELP IT REACH ITS FULL POTENTIAL.

Christofides: When Tech says that they want to do better and they want to provide more opportunities for people who are in a not privileged state, as most of the students on campus are, here is our walk. This is what we're doing to prove that we want to help. We're paying for the classes. You know, we're offering these opportunities. We're not just providing lip service... We want to help this area. We are helping this area, and we're doing everything we can to provide advisors and opportunities for these students to come on campus.

Peters: PIT BULL, REMEMBER? THE TEACHING WORLD IN LUBBOCK IS SMALL. CODY AND CHRIS CAN ATTEST TO THAT. THEY'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR YEARS. THEY EACH TELL THIS STORY OF BEING IN THE SAME CLASS IN GRAD SCHOOL AT TECH. THEY HELPED EACH OTHER GET THROUGH IT. SO, WHEN CHRIS WAS CHARGED WITH LEADING THIS PROGRAM, THE ONE THAT CODY WAS ALREADY INVESTING SO MUCH TIME AND WORK IN... IT FELT GOOD.

(Music)

Peters: BY THE WAY, JADEN GRADUATES FROM TEXAS TECH IN THE SPRING OF 2024 WITH A DEGREE IN CREATIVE WRITING AND AN OPEN MIND. MAYBE SHE'LL HAVE ONE OF HER MANUSCRIPTS PUBLISHED, MAYBE SHE'LL BECOME A PUBLISHER HERSELF. BUT REGARDLESS OF HER PROFESSION, SHE STANDS AS AN AMBASSADOR OF ECHS AND WILL FOREVER BE A RED RAIDER.

(Music Close)

Peters: 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](http://TODAY.TTU.EDU) SLASH FEARLESS AND DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA. FEARLESS IS A TEXAS TECH PRODUCTION. FROM HERE, IT'S POSSIBLE.