



Season 3 | Episode Three | Building The Framework

Taylor Peters, Host: LET'S THINK ABOUT COLLEGE LIKE WE ARE BUILDING A HOME. EDUCATION IS THE FOUNDATION, IT'S WHAT WE ARE ALL STANDING ON, THE REASON WE ARE HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE. THEN, LET'S THINK OF THE DEGREE PLAN AS THE BLUEPRINT FOR THE REST OF THE HOUSE... WHAT CLASSES YOU NEED, WHAT LABS YOU'LL TAKE, WHAT PROFESSORS YOU'LL MEET... AND AS YOU GO, BRICKS OF EXPERIENCE WILL SOLIDIFY THAT BLUEPRINT. PAINT SWATCHES AND LIGHT FIXTURES ARE THE DETAILS THAT MAKE IT PERSONAL... THEY'LL BRING COLOR AND LIFE. THIS MIGHT BE THE PEOPLE YOU MEET OR ORGANIZATIONS THAT YOU JOIN... IN TIME, EMBELISHMENTS AND ACCESSORIES WILL CREATE SOMETHING THAT IS UNIQUELY YOURS.

Peters: WHEN YOU BUILD A HOME, YOU CHOOSE WHAT YOU WANT... HOW IT WILL LOOK, HOW IT WILL FEEL, HOW IT WILL SERVE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR FUTURE. AND THE SAME IS TRUE FOR COLLEGE. WHAT STARTS WITH EDUCATION BLOSSOMS, PROVIDING YOU WITH MORE THAN YOU COULD HAVE IMAGINED IS POSSIBLE.

Peters: THIS IS EPISODE THREE- BUILDING THE FRAMEWORK.

(Music)

Peters: UNIVERSITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY ARE HAVING TO GET CREATIVE. LET'S FACE IT, COLLEGE HAS CHANGED A LOT. THE EVER-EVOLVING INSTITUTIONAL STORY WAS TURNED ON ITS HEAD IN 2020... BUT EVEN BEFORE THAT, IT SEEMS LIKE EACH YEAR, COLLEGE CALLS FOR MORE. AND PEOPLE LIKE MITZI LAUDERDALE JUST SO HAPPEN TO BE IN THE BUSINESS OF MORE.

(Music)

Mitzi Lauderdale, Vice Provost for Academic Innovation and Student Success: But really, it's what keeps me up at night is, are we doing everything that we can. Oftentimes, we need to try something and if it doesn't work, then let's not do it anymore or figure out how we can adjust to meet the needs to make it work.

Peters: SHE SITS ACROSS THE WOODEN CONFERENCE TABLE FROM ME, SPINNING SOFTLY IN HER SEAT, A LEATHERBOUND JOURNAL NOTEBOOK SITS OPEN AND EXPECTANTLY BEFORE HER. MITZI IS THOUGHTFUL... SHE'S FEIRCE AND SHE'S FUNNY. BUT MAYBE MOST IMPORTANTLY, SHE'S A PROBLEM SOLVER. IT'S ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS I LEARN ABOUT HER.

Peters: HER OFFICIAL TITLE IS VICE PROVOST FOR ACADEMIC INNOVATION AND STUDENT SUCCESS.

Peters: So, people are maybe listening to this and they're like, what does that title mean? How would you explain in a couple of sentences the basis of what you do here at Tech?

Lauderdale: In a couple of sentences, I would say that we're looking at student success holistically. So it's really bringing the people together that are serving students across the spectrum of coming on board to Texas Tech when students are handed off at Red Raider orientation.

Peters: SHE HAS WORKED AT TECH FOR YEARS, AFTER GRADUATING FROM TECH WITH A DEGREE IN RESTURAUNT AND HOTEL MANAGEMENT, SHE SPENT A SHORT TIME WORKING AT DISNEYWORLD IN ORLANDO-

Peters: I just, I wanted to know a little bit more about your story and how you came to be in this....

Lauderdale: What, that I worked at Walt Disney World? (Laughing)

Peters: I literally have in parentheses, when you worked at Disney. Haha

Peters: ANYWAY, SHE WAS RECRUITED BACK TO TEXAS TECH...

Lauderdale: Speaking of personal connections, it was one of my former faculty members and he called and he said, we need you back here.

Peters: MICKY MOUSE MESSAGE DELIVERED... SO SHE WAS BACK. SHE WOULD GO ON TO GET HER MASTERS AND WENT TO LAW SCHOOL... LATER SHE WOULD BECOME AN ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR STUDENTS. SHE HAS WORN DIFFERENT HATS, BUT TO HER... THE STUDENTS ARE THE STRAW THAT STIRS THE DRINK. AND THAT'S WHERE SHE WANTS HER TIME TO BE SPENT.

Lauderdale: I'll start with sharing whenever I came into this administrative role that I asked to keep a teaching appointment because I said, if you want me to help with student success, I have to interact with students. I need to be in the classroom, otherwise, I'm going to lose a pulse on what it is that they need.

(Music)

Peters: LAST SPRING, IN 2023, TEXAS TECH LAUNCHED THIS NEW INITIATIVE CALLED THE RAIDER SUCCESS HUB. IT'S BASICALLY A LARGE UMBRELLA THAT HOUSES STUDENT SUCCESS RESOURCES. THE CAREER CENTER SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION,

NATS Hi, I'm Sarah. Hi, I'm Paige... It's nice to meet you.

Peters: AND THESE GUYS... MEET THE SUCCESS SPECIALISTS.

Student: You mentioned disability, do I need a medical exemption? Do you know what I would need for that?

Success specialist: So, you know, off the top of my head I don't. But I am happy to figure it out with you, I don't want to leave you...

Peters: THEY'LL BE DOING TRAININGS LIKE THIS ONE FOR 8 WEEKS. THEY'LL SPEND HOURS LEARNING ABOUT EVERY RESOURCE THAT'S AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS- ACADEMIC, PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH, STUDENT ORGS, CLUBS, RESOURCES FOR FOOD, FINANCIAL AID... ALL OF IT! AND AFTER THEY TRAIN, THE SPECIALISTS ARE SENT OUT TO EACH COLLEGE ON CAMPUS. THESE ARE JUST A FEW OF THE FIRST 13... WHAT WE WILL CALL ROUND ONE OF SPECIALISTS- THE OGS, THE FIRST ONES TO TRAIN AND HOLD THIS POSITION.

(Coffee Brewing)

Peters: ELI TAKES HIS COFFEE BLACK, UNBLEMISHED BY CREAM OR SUGAR. HE SITS ACROSS FROM ME IN THE OFFICE THAT HE SHARES WITH ANOTHER SUCCESS SPECIALIST.

Eli Harvill, Success Specialist: I guess the biggest thing is that the students just want to be heard.

Peters: WE SPEND ABOUT AN HOUR CHATTING... BUT IT TAKES NO TIME AT ALL TO FEEL AND APPRECIATE HIS LIGHT. HIS LIFE WAS CHANGED DURING THE TRANSFORMATIVE YEARS OF COLLEGE. HE GREW UP IN LUBBOCK, LEFT FOR SCHOOL... BUT RETURNED TO FINISH AND GET HIS DEGREE FROM TECH IN 2019. HE SPENT A LITTLE BIT OF TIME WORKING IN RETAIL...

Harvill: But I wanted to be making an impact and a difference in the world in whatever way that I can like doing the greatest good with the abilities that I have. And when I saw the job posting come up, I was super excited because it's like a population of people I care about deeply like young adults.

Peters: HE WAS SOLD... HE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT HE WOULD HELP YOUNG ADULTS IN A DIFFERENT KIND OF WAY- HE HAD PLANS, AND THE DEGREE, TO WORK IN RECOVERY... SPECIFICALLY WITH THOSE STRUGGLING WITH EATING DISORDERS. BUT LIFE HAD DIFFERENT PLANS, SO HERE HE IS. DOING THE VERY THING THAT HE IS MEANT TO DO; IN A WAY HE COULDN'T HAVE IMAGINED.

Harvill: Like, I know I did what I was meant to do. Like, this is what I was built for, and it's a great feeling, honestly, so happy.

Peters: THESE SPECIALISTS AREN'T LIKE COUNSELORS OR ACADEMIC ADVISORS, THEY'RE DIFFERENT THAN LIFE COACHES... BUT TO BE HONEST, THEY'RE NONE OF THESE THINGS, YET ALL OF THEM. THE POSITION IS DESIGNED TO REINFORCE, TO EDUCATE, TO PLACE STUDENTS ON THE PATH FOR A HOLISTIC COLLEGE EXPERIENCE.

Alejandra Padgett, Success Specialist: I was a first-generation student thinking about them navigating, you know, higher education.

Peters: ALEJANDRA SPENT A YEAR AND A HALF IN THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION BEFORE MAKING THE TRANSITION FROM ANOTHER JOB WITHIN THE COLLEGE. FOR HER, THAT CONNECTION TO THE STUDENTS WAS MISSING. SHE HOPED THAT THIS NEW OPPORTUNITY WOULD BRING THAT INTO SHARPER FOCUS.

Padgett: But then slowly realizing like our position is to make that accessible to them. Right. And so being their tour guide almost to those resources, um... I really see that role in that way now because they're there, the resources are there.

AS SHE SITS AT HER DESK, MY EYES DRIFT JUST BEHIND HER SHOULDER WHERE HER FRAMED DEGREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO IS HANGING ON THE WALL. SHE HASN'T BEEN A COLLEGE STUDENT FOR MORE THAN 10 YEARS, SO SHE ADMITS IT'S DIFFERENT FOR STUDENTS TODAY.

Padgett: And I say times are different. I think vastly different even in the past, you know, ten years that I've been out of college and the support is needed because students are so much more aware of the struggles that they're going through, I think.

Paige Morrison, Success Specialist: I feel like this is kind of a Swiss Army knife.

Peters: THAT'S PAIGE... SHE'S DIFFERENT THAN ELI AND ALEJANDRA IN THE FACT THAT SHE HAD NO CONNECTION TO TECH BEFORE BECOMING A SPECIALIST. SHE GREW UP DOWN THE STREET FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE, WHERE SHE ATTENDED COLLEGE. BUT NEAR GRADUATION SHE REALIZED WHAT SHE HAD WORKED FOR WAS NO LONGER WHAT SHE WANTED.

Morrison: And it was that same day I was like having a panic attack. And I was like, maybe I'll do the Peace Corps. I don't know why I thought of it but I just kind of decided.

Peters: IT WAS A CRAZY DECISION... BUT IT CATAPULTED HER INTO A NEW SEASON OF LIFE. A YEAR OF SELF DISCOVERY THAT WAS ENDED BY COVID TURNED OUT TO BE JUST WHAT SHE NEEDED TO FIND THE NEXT STEP. SHE LEARNED IN THAT YEAR THAT HER PASSION WAS IN PEOPLE AND IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR HER TO GET BACK TO DOING THAT.

Morrison: And also just triaging the concerns of students. I know it's frustrating, when you need to ask 50 people for help before you get help and being able to have a student come in and I can say, yeah, go to Dakota and then send an email to Dakota and it's done and handled and I like that. It's a lot less frustrating for the students.

Peters: PAIGE BELIEVES THAT EVERY STUDENT NEEDS SOMEONE TO PROVIDE DIRECTION. AND ALEJANDRA AGREES... HELP MIGHT COME IN THE FORM OF A PROFESSOR, OR AN ACADEMIC ADVISOR... IT MIGHT COME FROM A PARENT, OR IN HER CASE, A BEST FRIEND.

Padgett: My best friend actually is that person who advocated for me who, you know, said like, no, we're going to go and speak to your advisor. We're going to go and speak to your instructors.

Peters: Good friends are so important

Padgett: Yeah, good friends are important. Yeah. And, you know, I mean, I, I have a master's degree now, and. And I didn't think I was going to make it through my first, you know, freshman year of college, so.

Peters: PAIGE, ALEJANDRA AND ELI ARE ALL DETERMINED TO BE A SOUNDING BOARD, A VOICE OF REASON, A FINGER POINTING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. EACH OF THEIR STORIES IS AS DIFFERENT AS THE ONES OF THE STUDENTS THEY WORK WITH TODAY.

Harvill: Like if in a week I'm really, really able to help like one student, it was a great week because that's one more student that was served than was served before. Like I am fulfilled. And then I think what's important also is that we recognize that it's the student's definition of success that we're striving for and not ours, because it can be really easy to come in with a preconceived notion of what success looks like.

(Music)

Peters: IN ORDER TO STAND IN THE GAP FOR STUDENTS, SPECIALISTS NEED TO KNOW EVERY SINGLE RESOURCE AVAILABLE. AND THAT IS A TALL ORDER. THERE ARE MORE THAN 500 STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND PROGRAMS ON CAMPUS. THESE RANGE FROM LIFESTYLE, TO ACADEMIC, TO SOCIAL AND HEALTH... AND SO MANY OF THEM ARE GEARED TOWARD MEETING THE BASIC NEEDS OF STUDENTS. AND THAT HAS BECOME MORE NECESSARY THAN YOU MIGHT THINK. ACCORDING TO A 2021 STUDY BY FORBES, 40% OF COLLEGE STUDENTS ARE FOOD INSECURE. MEANING THAT IN SOME CASES, STUDENTS MIGHT HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THINGS LIKE BOOKS AND FOOD. I THINK THAT MOST WOULD PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT STUDENTS SHOULDN'T HAVE TO CHOOSE. AND WITH PROGRAMS LIKE RAIDER RED'S FOOD PANTRY, THEY DON'T HAVE TO.

Peters: ROOM 117 OF DOAK HALL IS PACKED WITH ROWS AND SHELVES CONTAINING FOOD OF ALL KINDS.

Peters: So what do you enjoy just about working here, especially from your background and what you're studying with nutritional sciences?

Oyewole: So I realized the food pantry is a great resource to help students, not just international students, but all classification of student to meet their food needs, which is like someone experiencing food insecurity or maybe just out of money to buy a grocery.

Peters: MARY'S SMALL HANDS WORK SWIFLY AS SHE RESTOCKS CANS ON THE SHELF. THERE ARE ROWS OF CANNED VEGETABLES AND FRUITS IN CUPS, BOXES OF RICE, BAGS OF BEANS, SOUPS, CEREALS. BEHIND HER A FRIDGE HUMS SOFTLY, KEEPING COLD THE CARTONS OF MILK AND FRESH FRUIT.

Oyewole: And I was linking it to my nutrition degree. I'm a registered nutritionist in Nigeria. And so, this food insecurity is a major concern, not just in the U.S., but globally. So, I'm just contributing my own quota to help mitigate the effect of food insecurity among college students as a nutritionist.

Peters: SHE'S A DOCTORAL STUDENT IN NUTRITIONAL SCIENCES. SHE'S SMART AND COMPASSIONATE, SHE'S A WIFE AND A STUDENT... SO, MARY IS INVESTED IN THIS RESOURCE ON A LOT OF DIFFERENT LEVELS. FOR YEARS, STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT STUDENTS WHO ARE FOOD INSECURE ARE LESS LIKELY TO PERFORM WELL IN CLASS. IT'S OBVIOUS THAT THE NEED HAS PRESENTED ITSELF, AND MARY IS A SMALL COG IN THE MACHINE THAT AIMS TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM.

Oyewole: Sometimes it's not just about not having food. You don't have enough food that will carry on for a week, and then it disrupts your plans for studying and it also affects some of your metabolic health. It can result or impact the academic performance and also some psychological factors when you don't have food, or you don't have enough food.

(Checking out)

Peters: AS A UNIVERSITY GROWS THE WAY THIS ONE HAS, IT BECOMES MORE AND MORE CHALLENGING TO ENSURE NO STUDENT FALLS THROUGH THE CRACKS. BUT HOW DO YOU DO THAT? THE REALITY IS THAT 40,000 STUDENTS IS A LOT. MORE PEOPLE REQUIRE MORE PEOPLE, AND ADDING STAFF TO FOCUS ON OVERALL WELLBEING OF STUDENTS IS GETTING US CLOSER TO MEETING THOSE NEEDS. MORE THAN A HUNDRED STUDENTS STOP BY THE PANTRY EVERY WEEK. AND MOST OF THEM ARE RECURRING CUSTOMERS. FOR MANY OF THOSE STUDENTS, THIS RESOURCE ALLOWS THEM THE FREEDOM AND ACCESS THEY REQUIRE TO EARN THEIR DEGREE. AND THAT'S THE 'WHY' FOR MARY AND THE DOZENS OF OTHERS WHO PROVIDE THE FUEL FOR SO MANY STUDENTS.

NATS okay, so how is this class going? Y'all feeling okay? We're going to go over chapter four.

Peters: SHHHH... CLASS IS ABOUT START, PAY ATTENTION. WELL, IT'S NOT EXACTLY CLASS, BUT IT'S CLOSE. THIS IS CLASS BEYOND CLASS. WE'LL TELL YOU MORE AFTER THE BREAK.

Glenys Young, Editor of Texas Tech's Evermore magazine: Hi, this is Glenys Young... Editor of Texas Tech's Evermore magazine. Meeting people and hearing what they're passionate about is my favorite thing. It's more than just what I do in my work with Evermore... it's what fuels every conversation and interaction. In the Office of Communications and Marketing, we are constantly pursuing the stories of how this university is empowering our students, faculty, alumni and community... Join us as we uncover all the ways that Texas Tech is proving that From Here, It's Possible. To learn more about Evermore, visit today.ttu.edu/evermore.

(Music Close)

SI Leader: Is there anything in particular that y'all want me to go over?

Peters: FOR SOME, LEARNING IN A ROOM OF HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE IS CHALLENGING.

SI Leader: This exam should be pretty straightforward. You should have a good foundation of what debits and credits are, and what's increasing and decreasing.

Peters: ACTUALLY, I WOULD SAY THAT IN A 400 PERSON LECTURE, MOST OF US WOULD NOT BE BRAVE ENOUGH TO RAISE OUR HANDS AND ASK THE INSTRUCTOR TO PLEASE REPEAT THAT LAST PART. SO, TEXAS TECH HAS STEPPED UP. TAKING TUTORING TO ANOTHER LEVEL. THIS IS SUPPLEMENTAL INSTRUCTION.

SI Leader: So, let's get straight into it...Cash and cash equivalents... The first one is cash, right?

Peters: AFTER HIS FRESHMAN YEAR, JORDAN HAGOOD CHANGED HIS MAJOR FROM ENGINEERING TO ACCOUNTING. IN HIS SENIOR YEAR, HE'S LEADING THESE SI SESSION FOR ACCOUNTING 2300. THERE ARE 9 SECTIONS OF THIS CLASS, WITH 70 STUDENTS IN EACH SECTION... ALL WITH DIFFERENT PROFESSORS. SO, JORDAN IS HERE TO HELP BRIDGE THE GAP.

Will Lopez, SI Leader: And so I think that's, that's also maybe kind of what gets me in the morning is thinking like, you know, okay, we're responsible for all these people and all our employees.

Peters: WILL LOPEZ AND I CHAT QUIETLY AS WE SIT ON THE BACK ROW OF THE LECTURE HALL. WE'RE WAITING FOR THE SESSION TO OFFICIALLY START. WILL HAS BEEN OVERSEEING THESE SI LEADERS SINCE 2017. HE LOVES TO TRAVEL, TO READ... TO SPEND TIME WITH HIS FAMILY, HIS MOM IS RETIRED FROM TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS, HIS DAD HAD A LONG AND SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN LAW ENFORCEMENT. HIS PARENTS SPENT THEIR LIVES SERVING PEOPLE, AND THEY'VE RAISED A SON WHO FINDS HIS OWN IDENTITY IN DOING JUST THAT. WILL ABSOLUTELY POURS HIMSELF INTO HIS JOB. AND BOY, DOES HE LOVE IT.

Lopez: I love my college experience, and for me, the challenge is how can I create that for our students here at Texas Tech? Because we have some pretty amazing people here at Texas Tech that deserve that

Peters: THERE ARE NEARLY 50 SI LEADERS, CREATING THESE LESSONS FOR DOZENS OF COURSES ACROSS CAMPUS. THESE SI SESSIONS ARE NOT TUTORING PROVIDED BY THE COLLEGE... IT'S IN ADDITION TO THAT. THE LEADERS ARE SELECTED BECAUSE OF THEIR MAJOR, OVERALL GPA, AND THEY'VE TAKEN THE CLASS BEFORE... BUT THEY'RE ALSO INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DYNAMIC AND DEDICATED. LIKE RHEA.

Karkera: Our next slide is we are diving into enthalpy, so... what is the heat change of a reaction? What is that defined as?

Peters: RHEA, JORDAN, AND THE OTHER SI LEADERS WILL CREATE THEIR OWN LESSON PLANS FOR THESE SESSIONS.

Hagood: If you've already paid rent and you've lived there till the middle of the month... and you come to the landlord and are like, 'Hey, I need my cash back'..."

Peters: THEY GET PAID, OF COURSE, BUT FOR THESE LEADERS AND FOR WILL, IT'S NOT JUST A JOB. THEY ARE TRYING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE PASS RATES OF THESE LECTURES THAT ARE NOT ONLY COMPLEX BUT ALSO HIGHLY ATTENDED.

Lopez: I think for me in the morning, what gets me up is helping other people and making that experience the best for them and that journey.

Peters: AND AS THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE EVOLVES, IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE PEOPLE IN PLACE WHO ARE THINKING BIG. WHO ARE THINKING TOWARD THE FUTURE. AND OFTEN TIMES WE SEE THAT IT'S REFLECTIONS OF OUR OWN PAST THAT ENABLE THAT FUTURE TO TAKE SHAPE.

Lopez: You know, my dad's mom was from Mexico, and she didn't have, didn't speak English, didn't get a college degree, didn't finish high school. And she made all of her kids go to higher education and all her grandkids go to and we've pretty much all, have all attended.

Peters: OUR CHOICES HAVE POWER. BUT THE TRUE SCOPE OF THE IMPACT IS SEEN IN THE STUDENTS SITTING IN THESE LESSONS ACROSS CAMPUS YEAR AFTER YEAR. WILL'S GRANDMOTHER... HER DECISION DEVELOPED A PASSION IN HER GRANDSON, WHICH IN TURN HAS HAD MORE LASTING IMPACTS THAN WE CAN EVEN KNOW. WILL KNOWS THAT EVERY STUDENT HAS A VASTLY DIFFERENT STORY. WHERE THEY COME FROM MATTERS, JUST AS MUCH AS WHERE THEY'RE HEADED.

(Music close)

Harvill: We're trying everything, is the answer. We're throwing all the spaghetti at the wall and seeing what sticks

Peters: THE SUCCESS SPECIALISTS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY MADE IT THROUGH THEIR FIRST SEMESTER... THEY'RE STILL LEARNING, OF COURSE. PROBABLY WILL BE FOR A WHILE, BUT THEY'RE PROUD OF THEIR WORK AND THE IMPACT THAT THEY HAVE ON STUDENTS. AND THEY SHOULD BE, THEY'RE THE FIRST OF THEIR KIND. IT'S NOT AN EASY THING TO DO, NAVIGATING A NEW, GRASSROOTS IDEA AND TO BE THE FIRST TO IMPLEMENT IT. BUT THEY'VE DONE IT TOGETHER, IT'S ONE OF THE THINGS THAT MAKES THIS WORK WORTHWHILE.

Harvill: We're in a soft opening right now. And so, we have this... I've met with these people, this is what I've run into... so coming in the fall, it's like okay, I've seen that. I've seen that before.

Peters: A FEW OF THEM STILL GET TOGETHER FOR LUNCH ALMOST EVERY DAY ON CAMPUS. THEY BOUNCE IDEAS OFF EACH OTHER, TALK ABOUT WORK, NOT WORK, THEIR KIDS AND FAMILIES AND BEING DOG PARENTS. AND THEY TALK ABOUT WHAT THEY'VE LEARNED... HOW THEY'VE GROWN...

(Music)

Peters: THEY CARE DEEPLY FOR THIS JOB, THE STUDENTS, THE TEAM THEY'RE PART OF. THEY'RE DETERMINED TO MAKE AN IMPACT... IT TAKES ME BACK TO ONE OF THE FINAL DAYS OF TRAINING AND A VIDEO THIS GROUP WATCHED TOGETHER OF AN OLD TED TALK. I'LL LEAVE YOU WITH IT HERE, IT'S CALLED LOLLIPOP MOMENTS.

Drew Dudley, TedTalk Speaker: I wanted to start by asking everyone in the audience how many of you are completely comfortable with calling yourselves a leader? See I've asked that question all the way across the country and everywhere I ask it no matter where, there's always a huge portion of the audience that won't put up their hand. I've come to understand that we've made leadership into something bigger than us. We've made it about something beyond us. We've made it about changing the world. And we've taken this title of leader and we treat it as something that one day we're going to deserve. I worry sometimes, that we spend so much of our time celebrating amazing things that hardly anybody can do that we've convinced ourselves that those are the only things worth celebrating. And we start to devalue the things that we can do every day and we start to take moments where we truly are a leader, and we don't let ourselves take credit for it and we don't let ourselves feel good about it.

Peters: THIS IS DREW DUDLEY... HE TELLS THIS STORY OF BEING ON A COLLEGE CAMPUS MANY YEARS AGO- HE WAS WALKING AROUND DURING ORIENTATION HANDING OUT LOLLIPOPS TO INCOMING STUDENTS. HE WAS DORKY, AND DISARMING, HE WAS LOUD. DREW HANDED A LOLLIPOP TO A YOUNG MAN AND TOLD HIM TO GIVE IT TO THE GIRL STANDING NEXT TO HIM... THAT SHE NEEDED IT ON THAT DAY. HE MADE A JOKE, DIFFUSING THE TENSION AROUND HIM, BREAKING THE ICE. WELL FAST FORWARD TO FOUR YEARS LATER AND THAT YOUNG WOMAN IS NOW SET TO GRADUATE. SHE FINDS DREW AND SHARES WITH HIM THAT IN THAT MOMENT, SHE WAS SECONDS AWAY FROM PULLING OUT OF ORIENTATION. FROM NOT EVEN ATTENDING COLLEGE AT ALL. THAT SHE WAS ANXIOUS AND NERVOUS AND DIDN'T THINK SHE COULD DO IT. SHE TELLS HIM...

Dudley: I haven't spoken to you once in the four years since that day but I heard that you were leaving and I had to come up and tell you that you have been an incredibly important person in my life. I'm going to miss you, good luck. Here's the kicker, I don't remember that. That was such an eye-opening transformative moment for me. To think that maybe the biggest impact I'd ever had on anyone's life. A moment that had a woman walk up to a stranger four years later and say 'you've been an incredibly important person in my life' was a moment that I didn't even remember.

(Music)

Peters: THIS EXERCISE IS ABOUT THAT IMPACT WE TALKED ABOUT EARLIER, IT'S ABOUT PRESENCE. IT'S ABOUT LISTENING AND POSITIONING. THE REASON TEXAS TECH IS INVESTING IN THESE SUCCESS SPECIALISTS IS TO SHOW STUDENTS ALL THE AREAS THAT ARE AT WORK FOR THEIR BENEFIT. TO GUIDE AND LEAD THEM TO DISCOVER WHAT THEY'RE CAPABLE OF THROUGHOUT THEIR TIME AT TECH. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS LEADERS FOR OUR STUDENTS. AS PEOPLE WHO CAN HELP MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Dudley: Every single one of you has been a catalyst for a lollipop moment. You have made someone's life better by something that you said or that you did. And as long as we make leadership something bigger than us, as long as we keep leadership something beyond us, as long as we make it about changing the world, we give ourselves an excuse not to expect it from ourselves and from each other. Marianne Williamson said 'Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our greatest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.' It is our light, and not our darkness that frightens us. My call to action today is that we need to get over that. We need to get over our fear of how extraordinarily powerful we can be in each other's lives. We need to get over it so we can move beyond it.

(Music)

NEXT TIME... FEARLESS GOES INTO THE WILD.

NATS: Gears moving, bike crashing, heavy breathing

Emma Montgomery: When you can't do it or when you feel too scared to do it, it's like, then why am I even here?

Peters: TO LEARN HOW ONE MAN HAS MADE HIS PASSION HIS PROFESSION, CREATING HIS OWN PATH IN A WORLD ALL ITS OWN. JEROD FOSTER IS FOSTERING A GROUP OF STUDENTS TO FIND THEMSELVES IN THAT WILDERNESS.

Jerod Foster: This class is one that really humbles people that do really well at a lot of things.

(Music)

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 WE TALKED ABOUT TODAY IN THIS EPISODE, GO TO TODAY.TTU.EDU/FEARLESS AND DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA. FEARLESS IS A TEXAS TECH PRODUCTION. FROM HERE, IT'S POSSIBLE.

(Music close)