

28. Leadership and Loyalty: Meeting Students Where They're At

Gavin Kelly

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Kelly Cole

Hey, y'all, welcome to the Beyond 1894 podcast. My name is Kelly Cole. I'm a communications intern and a Louisiana Tech student. And today, we're going to be talking about student engagement and involvement on campus. And we have chiah bombard Student Government Association President lead La'Dereka Christian, Black Student Union president, and don't attack it a union board president and these are our three, in my opinion, main organizations on our campus that kind of lead, you know, campus events and activities. So today, we're going to hear a little bit about their tech journeys and what they see for this next year of campus activities and involvement on Louisiana Tech campus. So I'm so excited to have them. Hey, yo. Hey, Kelly. So I just want to get right into it with the first question. Why did you decide to come to Louisiana Tech? Was it just the opportunity, scholarship, research and innovation? y'all go ahead?

Dalton Tackett

Okay, um, so Originally, I chose Louisiana Tech, because I ran cross country in high school, and one of my friends was really big into engineering. And I was as well. So he told me, he was coming to tech, which I'd never heard of before. And I was thinking about going to LSU. So I looked into it, and I found out tech gave me a way better scholarship and was way cheaper. So I chose tech. Soon as I got here, I got plugged in as plugged in as I could, and the rest is history.

Yeah, we got to watch those bills as college students got to watch. La'Dereka, what about you? Um, for me,

La'Dereka Christian

it was more so I knew I wanted to major in business. And so do my research. Louisiana Tech was probably one of the best business schools if not the best in the state. And so I kind of did my research into it. I had a cousin who actually is from here. So I'd been here like multiple times, we are really close. And did my research came for Time Out for tech, actually met Morgan Funes. She has a big role to play. And while I'm here, when I met her, she was very just welcoming. And me and my mom knew from jump soon as we stepped on the campus that this is where I needed to be. So that's how I got here. Awesome.

Kiarra Bombard

Yeah, I think kind of like, like La'Dereka said, like, I just one day, I knew that I was supposed to be here, I was actually going somewhere else. I paid a housing deposit at another university. And I was dead set on going as far away from our hometown as possible. And then I went to a final time up for tech, because that's just kind of a thing that we do from our hometown. So we can go to a football game. And I was like, What am I doing thinking that I don't belong here? And I think that's what tech kind of does, is it just kind of ropes you in and makes you feel at home even when you aren't looking for it? Yeah, so

Kelly Cole

going into that. Why did you decide to get involved on Louisiana Tech's campus? Was it because you wanted to make this place your home? And was it so important for students to get involved on campus, especially in their first year here?

Kiarra Bombard

Yeah, so I think that getting involved is something that I decided to do when I was a freshman, because, you know, in high school, I was really involved. And I found a lot of pride in the things that I did then. And like, it's where I found a lot of myself and I wanted to do that same thing in college, because I want that's how I kind of figured I was gonna find my place. But I think that as I've grown and as I've stayed in college and, you know, gotten involved in other different things across Tech's campus, I've realized that, you know, getting involved is really important to meet people. And it's really important to find your place, but it's also important just to realize that you can better yourself while bettering a place that you love. And I think that being involved has opened me up to so many people that I wouldn't have met just like in my on campus apartment or in the caf, like I got to meet people from all demographics across campus. And together, we've gotten to do a lot of great things. And I think as a first year student, you don't realize that you can make a difference. And Tech has a unique way of making that a possibility for our students.

La'Dereka Christian

Yeah, for me. I was honestly terrified when I first got here on Tech's campus. I did not know I think the main thing I was worried about was I was going to be three and a half hours away from home because I'm from Baton Rouge. And I was just like, how am I going to make friends? How am I gonna make relationships like how was this going to look for me? And so when I first got on campus, I immediately heard about Black Student Union. And so I knew me my roommate at the time. We knew that that was like an organization we were going to get involved in And honestly, I always tell like what I've been telling my freshmen throughout the summer and just other students in general is just that, get in one organization that you see yourself on one organization that you want to be in, but also one organization that, you know, you necessarily would not have been a part of. In high school, I really wasn't the most involved person. So it's kind of interesting to see how I've evolved, because of the different relationships and connections that I've made through these organizations. And so the best advice I can give, you just do take that first step to get involved, you'd be surprised at like how much it helps you grow as a person and how much more they're willing to bring out a view through these organizations.

Kelly Cole

Right. And for those students who maybe you're listening to this, and you're like, I'm not a freshman, but I'm not involved in you know, I want to get involved, I want to find my place. Well, you can take it

from me, I didn't get involved until after I had gone and spent my sophomore year at Disney doing a Disney College Program. And so I came back in with, you know, I jumped in the water feet burst and just jumped into it with student government and in a sorority Greek life and finding my place through that and student recruiters. So take it from me, it's never too late. I'm Dalton, you are an engineer, or you're trying to get there an engineer's that's a lot on your academic roster. Um, so how do you think being involved has affected your academic success?

Dalton Tackett

Well, I'll say definitely, in the beginning, it was a struggle, I'm trying to figure out how to balance that time with spending all my time doing engineering and studying, because it's a lot of effort that needs to go into it, and also trying to spend my time doing the things I need to do for uni board. And eventually, just kind of hit my stride, I guess, you know, I found, I came in originally looking at mechanical engineering, switch to electrical engineering, and then finally found my way to instrumentation and control systems, engineering technology, which is a mouthful. But, you know, once I found what I'd love to do, you know, homework wasn't a chore anymore. You know, I was, I could spend my time at home actually wanting to do my homework. And then that way, you know, the next day when I'm doing any board stuff I have all the time to, you know, focus on that. Right? What are all of yalls majors, I forgot to ask that at the beginning.

Kiarra Bombard

I'm a kinesiology major, but I am getting my Masters in Business Administration.

La'Dereka Christian

I'm a finance major with a minor in Human Development and Family science. Awesome.

Kelly Cole

And then we know Dalton's and if you wanted. And if you wanted to know, man, I am a communications major concentrating in journalism. So we are a broad spectrum over here. And, you know, how does how does that affect you? I mean, y'all being presidents of these organizations, do you all think that that holds you to a higher standard, that you push yourself academically, I think

Kiarra Bombard

there's a lot to be said about leadership setting an example. It's something that I know the three of us here all the time, is to lead by example, and show everybody what should be done. But I think it really starts with, like your foundation, and I think like as a freshman getting involved in Greek life, like that really showed me accountability. And, as in regards to my academics, and then as we as I got more involved, it was honestly a challenge, like Dalton said, to keep up with my academics and balance everything, but once you do it, it definitely becomes easier, if that makes sense. But I think like as a president, now I look back. And we kind of can be an example to everyone and be like, if they can do it like I can do, you know, if I am stressed out, because, you know, I'm a freshman, and I want to be involved in this one organization. But my homework is a big load right now. I think that we can kind of be role models in that aspect. And I think that I take a lot of pride in that. And so whenever I'm frustrated, I just have to sit back and remember that when you do have a platform like we do, when you do have students looking up to you in a role of leadership, like you just have to, we can rest in that a

little bit. And so I do think that there's a lot of pressure for us to do well, in every aspect, not just academics, but it's also really cool to know that like that example that we set can help somebody else.

La'Dereka Christian

For me, I always think back to remembering my why. When stuff gets really hard for me or like academically alive, anything like that, it's very important to remember why you're doing this. And at the end of the day, you know, I was elected into this position, it was something that, you know, these people below me could see the potential in me. And so my biggest thing is not trying to let them down, my biggest thing is just making sure that I'm doing my part as a leader to continue to move the needle forward with diversity and inclusion, which is like the biggest thing for Blackstone you in this year. And so just remember my wife, and you know, jamara, the last president, you always told me heavy is the head that wears the crown. And so even though I am in this position, you know, I always try to remember my why remember that, you know, even though my head may be a little heavy, that I'm here for a reason, and that I just kind of have to keep pushing, not just for me, but for the people who are looking up to me and people below me. Because you'd be surprised that somebody is always watching you. And even when you think you're not making an impact you are so I'm just always very conscious of what I do what I say. And just making sure that I'm not here on behalf of me, but people that are looking up to me.

Kelly Cole

Yes. And I think that y'all are all great examples of Louisiana Tech students and just making a push for your current journeys at Louisiana Tech. But chiar, you mentioned going and getting your business administration, your master's in that. And but what are your other post grad? Dreams, ambitions? internship jobs, grad school? What are we looking at? If you don't know? That's okay, we're always growing and ever changing?

Kiarra Bombard

Yeah, I'll be the first to say I don't really have it all figured out. And I think I think that so many times that like, I would say, like we were talking about earlier, like to be an example for somebody, you know, they could they kind of put us apart, they set us apart. But I think that I speak for all three of us when I say like, we are just normal students trying to figure it out to you. And yes, I think to a lot of students, we look like administration. And I just really think that it's important to emphasize the fact that we are students, and I'm getting a master's in a degree that has nothing to do with my undergraduate degree. And do I know what I'm going to do with that after? Absolutely not. And so just because we do things that some people might see, as maybe a bigger step than that, then there's we're just the same as you were just 20 something year olds trying to figure out.

Kelly Cole

And you can have a five year plan and that five year plan, live loves to throw curveballs, I had everything planned out from the minute I got into college, to the minute I exited to the dream career, the dream company, and then life threw a curveball, and then it threw another one. So we're just floating.

La'Dereka Christian

I think you start to realize throughout college, like the different spaces and places and positions that you're putting in, are there for a reason. And so it sounds very crazy. But the plan for me right now, hence the minor is to get my master's in social work. Shout out to the queen, Dean divani lavonne for pushing me into this, but um, that's really the plan right now. I The plan is to go on to political social work, and just kind of working with like policymakers, and making sure that like the laws and policies that they're making are on behalf of like, you know, social, racial, economic justice. So that's the plan. But I know for sure that I'm doing my Master's in social work, but just where that will take me. I'm not sure. Wherever the Lord leads me at this point, praise God.

Dalton Tackett

I'll say I'm, I'm in the same boat as chiar. I'm just going along. I really need to figure it out. Because I am graduating in May.

Kelly Cole

But who knows? I think we're all just preaching to the choir at this point. As a tech student, we follow our 12 tenants, for me personally, very religiously, I think that our 12 tenants are just a great way to be a great representation of just a good human. But what is your favorite tech tenant? And how do you think that that has influenced your mindset as a tech student? Mine personally is commitment because I think if you can commit to anything, and keep that commitment, and you know, uphold the other 11 tenants with it, then you can do a great job at anything that you put your mind to, but what are your goals?

Dalton Tackett

I'd say mine would be respect. Um, I think it's really important to understand and respect other people's opinions on on things. One thing I really gained from my experience was I talked with one of the former UB presidents Logan caskey. I don't know if anybody would remember him. He's old. But one thing he told me was one of his core values was open mindedness and understanding that he doesn't have the answer for everything. And that's something that I really agree with, you know, I'm not this perfect dude, like Chiara said earlier, I'm just a kid. I'm just same age as everybody else. She's going about life doing my thing. I don't know everything. And so I think it's really important to respect other people and respect, you know, their ideas. And you can, you know, help form your own ideas from that. Yeah, so that's a great one. Yeah.

La'Dereka Christian

Mine would have to be integrity, because I think your integrity says a lot, especially when there's other people that can speak to your character. And so I'm very conscious of just, honestly how I handle myself and things that I do, even when no one is watching. It's very important, because you have people then that can, that are able to speak on behalf of you on behalf of your character, they're able to put you in places in different positions and things that you wouldn't have been able to, you know, be in unless they saw that interviewing you and that that character. And so that's a really important one for me.

Kiarra Bombard

Yeah, I think loyalty. I know, loyalty is my favorite tenant, because I just think it embodies a lot of all the tenants. And I think whenever when you pick your favorite tenant, you're like, Oh, that one embodies every single one of them. But loyalty, I just, it hits different. For me, it's, I think, especially in my position, like my top priority, my top job, my no matter what the job description says, is to be loyal to our student body and to be loyal to the university while doing it. And I think loyalty is always a company, or it should always be accompanied by understanding. And I think that goes along with a lot of what Dalton was saying. It's just like understanding that, when you're loyal to someone, and when you're loyal to something, you understand that there's aspects of it that you're not always going to agree with. And you understand that there's aspects that are going to be hard, and they're not always going to be easy. But when you're loyal to it, you love it enough to do it anyway. And so loyalty I think, just encompasses all the tenets of tech, which, like Kelly said, is just i a framework, a blueprint for being a good person, and being a good human, and not just a good tech student. But I think that the tenants really show a lot of what tech does, and it's create people it's help motivate people to be better than when they came in. And right, yeah,

Kelly Cole

I always make sure to mention them when we walk through the student center in the caf when I'm doing a tour for a prospective student, just showing those off. And you know, saying, This is not only about being a tech student, no matter where you attend college, or wherever you go in your life, this is just a good, like you said, a good framework for your future and for yourself as a human. But speaking about the future, we're a little unsure right now, with everything going on and in our world. But What do y'all think this next year will look like? As far as events for students getting involved on campus? I know that we have DOL call coming up, where we help freshmen students move in, and then we have Welcome Week. And we had talked about that a little bit before we started recording. But What do y'all think that this next year will look like events wise and everything?

Dalton Tackett

I'll say, as far as up goes, we like of course, we have a masked mandate right now, but everything should be going according to plan. You know, we're just kind of playing it by ear, seeing how it goes. And until something changes, we're gonna keep going as planned. But Erica, what do we got going on with the Black Student Union, to be completely honest, um, we've,

La'Dereka Christian

we're working on some things right now. But with everything that's going on, we're just trying to come up with like a good backup plan for the year, because the main goal for this year wouldn't be my executive board I've really been talking about was just making sure trying to figure out how to rope students back in with everything that happened this past year with COVID. And people being zoomed out, and you know, just not really wanting to leave the house and not being able to leave the house, just trying to figure out how to engage those students back. And so that's been like the biggest goal for this year, with the mass mandate and everything. I know, we will be trying to probably make some changes, hopefully nothing too drastic. Hopefully, we'll still be able to have like in person meetings and everything like that.

Kelly Cole

A little unknown thing that for some reason is unknown, but everybody can attend Black Student Union meeting.

La'Dereka Christian

I'm glad you mentioned that. That was something I wanted to dispel. People people automatically hear black and think, Oh, it's only for black students. But that's definitely not true. And that's definitely something that I want to try to work on this year is just making them more inclusive, and letting students know that anybody can join. It's not just for black students. And so especially with the climate that we're in on campus with, you know, inclusion and diversity, you definitely won't be issue to kind of be the forerunners for that and make sure that we are being inclusive as well and not you know, excluding any other students, right? And

Kelly Cole

I attended a couple meetings last year, especially the one that was my favorite was y'all had Adrian Perkins on a zoom call. And that was awesome. Just his wisdom and amazingness was great. Kiarra, what do you and I have going on with SGA, I would love to.

Commercial

So

Kiarra Bombard

really, with the world being the way it is, right now, with the all the things changing every single day, I just, I think my goal for SGA and SGA school, as a whole is going to just be bettering the student experience where we're at. And no matter what that looks like, no matter what the present day is, no matter what mandates we have, no matter what the numbers look like, I want to make sure that the student experiences being better being bettered, there, we're not waiting for something to happen to make students feel special in college or not being I really want to be proactive and not reactive. I hate that a lot of times, some leadership teams, they wait for something to happen, and then react to like, I want to be proactive before the situation ever occurs. And I think that I really just want to fight for the normalcy of our students. And whatever that looks like, I just want to make it exciting for them. And I want them to feel safe while they do it. And also feel like this is their home no matter what it looks like. And I don't want to lose the tech spirit. Especially because I feel like we have almost two freshmen classes because they didn't get to experience tech fall quarter the way that we did. And I just want to really make that special for them. And I know that don't enlist Erica and all the other student leaders that aren't in this room are going to do that. And so the first week of school, the first Monday, election packets are going to go out for freshmen senators and homecoming court nominations at all, as well as our tech Leadership Council applications. And so that is a perfect way for you to get involved as a freshman, like we just talked about earlier. It is this. It's one of the biggest segues into forming relationships and connections on at the university. And so I just really encourage you all to do that. And yeah, just meeting students where they're at. And I see myself like making sure that we know where that places,

Kelly Cole

right, yeah. And it's my senior year. So I would love to have some events to go to. I mean, I'm a people person. Let's do. Let's make let's have some tech prod every little be well, it has been great sitting down and talking to y'all. Do y'all have anything that y'all want to add? Go dogs. Amen. Amen. Good. All in the Joe and a few weeks. Yes, like yeah, tech. Yeah. Well, it's been great having y'all I hope that you enjoyed listening to this beyond 1894 podcast. And hey, freshmen, y'all get involved because it is one tech of a time. Like one heck of a time. Okay, thanks y'all for listening. Ever Loyal Be. go dogs.

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I'm freshmen communication major Kelsey Horath of winnsboro with a word of opportunity for all of our Louisiana Tech family and friends. I'm in school now. So I don't have the opportunity to do this yet. But you do. For as little as \$50 a year you can become a member of the Louisiana Tech Alumni Association. Through the Alumni Association, you stay connected with our university and with alumni and friends from all over the country in world. You can also stay connected with other graduates in your area there want to text local alumni chapters. receive text quarterly newsletter, the tenant, enjoy 1894 year university magazine. stay involved. You don't have to be a tech grad to join. Faculty, staff and parents are all part of the tech family and encouraged to join the Alumni Association. It keeps us closer to each other and to our university. For more information, visit la tech alumni data org or call 182557950 go dogs and ever loyal be.

Gavin Kelly

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