

## 35. Looking Back at 2021: Year in Review

### **Gavin Kelly**

You're listening to beyond 1894, a podcast dedicated to updating you on research, innovation and campus life happening at Louisiana Tech University. Ladies and gentlemen, Welcome to the Beyond 1894 podcast. This is a special episode our year in review, we're gonna recap a lot of the great things that happened here at Louisiana Tech. We're joined by a panel of members from University Communications, the office that produces this podcast that you're listening to let's, let's go around the table and talk about who's here in the room. Gavin Kelly, Teddy Allen,

### **Tom Soto**

Tom Soto,

### **Tonya Oaks Smith**

Tonya oaks Smith,

### **Gavin Kelly**

So that's our team here today on the podcast, you're gonna be hearing from us. Us being Louisiana Tech University, which ranked highly on the US News and World Report college rankings list. We moved up over 30 spots from our previous year's ranking. It puts us at second among public universities in the state of Louisiana. So that's always good. A lot of good things happen in here at Louisiana Tech.

### **Tonya Oaks Smith**

It has been a good year 2021 has been a great year at Louisiana Tech. Sometimes it's was incredibly challenging, but it was a great year. So how do we start off the year?

### **Tom Soto**

With a bang, finishing out the campaign? Fundraising Campaign, we finished out with over 171 million with the campaign was on forever, forever. Lawyer everyone goal was

### **Gavin Kelly**

125. Wow.

### **Tonya Oaks Smith**

Wow. That was the anniversary, right? So blue that also actually met it within a year of opening the campaign. Correct. That's cool. But what went into those, the outstanding fundraising year that we had,

### **Tom Soto**

the Giving Day was another big day for us, we raised over a million dollars, this is a third year in a row that we've raised over a million dollars on giving a thank you to everyone who has given to the

university, we really appreciate it. There's been a lot of good things we've been able to do with this money. And we're gonna talk about some of those things today.

**Teddy**

And thanks, especially since everybody's coming off, bearish stuff, tornado in all of that said people still managed to help the university. It's thanks a lot for all our alumni and friends and students and staff who saw the you know, the importance of, of given here.

**Tonya Oaks Smith**

Well, in faculty and staff giving has reached an incredible high as well. And that's important because when we show support for a university, then donors come in, and they understand that we support the university as well. So what have we done with that with some of those some of those funds some, I mean, we've seen a lot of construction around campus so

**Gavin Kelly**

you can already just walk around and you can see a lot of what's how that's benefiting our campus community,

**Teddy**

the dorms that we used to live in a long time ago that weren't air conditioned and blah, blah, beautiful community bathrooms like living in the locker room. Those are being replaced with drive down tech drives. Yeah, you know, good, not good for anybody. If you drive down tech drive, you'll see the new ones that have opened and the others that have been constructed and you know, the old Hudson Hall and all it's long gone. I mean, once it got torn down it was actually kind of refreshing. But we're building all over there the green space over Baba College of Business and I noticed a big it's like a piece of art or something over there. Have y'all seen that?

**Tonya Oaks Smith**

You made a spy

**Gavin Kelly**

that's it. That would be a spire.

**Teddy**

They had a fact it was like we're doing this on December the 15th. And last week there was a what do we do? We christened it or we dedicated IT.

**Tonya Oaks Smith**

Dedication Yeah. Beautiful new

**Teddy**

piece of music and poetry, love poetry and some wonderful brief talks from the President and from the state was represented and anyway it's a it's a farce for Ruston to have something I think like that.

We've had the little we got the little Bulldogs everywhere. We've got some statues here and there but it's pretty impressive and pretty blue.

**Tom Soto**

You know, Teddy talked about how much campus has changed coming down, the old dorms being gone, but it's not just that I mean as soon as you top the hill there at the Alumni Center, the entire entrance is completely different than it was 510 years ago. You've got new softball, baseball, soccer They're out there planting trees this week. And then you come on and up another railroad, and there's all the new dorms. It's a really nice place. There's a lot of great things going on here.

**Tonya Oaks Smith**

But not only not only have we improved the gateways, we're working on improving the interior, like Teddy talked about with a spire. And creating more accessible walkways, I mean that that's an important part of how our physical landscape has changed. That is not pretty part of our landscape, but it's a necessary part of our landscape. And all of this stuff is, is directly resulting from both our donors commitment to Louisiana Tech and creating the 21st century campus. And then our alumni partners who have helped us create the plan. Karbo is the landscape architecture firm that has helped us create the plan for how we're developing the campus going into the future. One of the things that I think is interesting to dilute back to the to the dorms, the new dorms is how we are not just creating a space where you sleep, and then get out but it's it is helping create the family, the Tech family, because there's lots of shared space, there's lots of community space. And it's close to new intramural grounds and recreational spaces as well. So

**Tom Soto**

aren't we gonna have some robots on these new walkways or something pretty soon,

**Tonya Oaks Smith**

maybe, right? Well, maybe not robots.

**Tom Soto**

The machines are taking over the world.

**Teddy**

We're not valid at all. But there are supposed to be some robots. We'll have more information on that at law tech.edu. Don't forget, keep checking live. And you know, green space, you don't think about green space, too. You don't have any of it. But once you start seeing it, and how much cleaner everything looks, if you haven't been to the camps in a while, it's gonna be hard pressed to recognize it. Also, in planning as tech point two, it's not just a building to be a building. We've needed another one for a long time because tech point one has been absolutely slammed. For that's good for everybody. That'd be Academic Success Center, is coming to the north end zone over by Dr. Guys Miss Cathy's house. And that to that to be a neat, spotted something desperately needed.

**Tom Soto**

And it's not just construction here. I mean, we've got construction going on in Boulder City, with the new Itr building going on over there.

**Gavin Kelly**

nearly completed, nearly completed. We'll have more on that early next year, right here on Beyond 1894. That's in the plans for us. And yeah, it's you sort of mentioned, Tanya, that it's not just like the construction and the improvements that are happening on campus. It's not for show, it's all very lived in it's all being very utilized. Even something like greenspace was designed with the purpose for gathering and students being able to use it and not just look at it so even aspire, which is a sculpture to be looked at. It's got a space for gathering and being a part of the campus. Everything's lived in, including the new softball baseball facilities that we mentioned. Not only were those lived in, but did they live up to the hype.

**Teddy**

That is correct. Billy bundick complex over there, the softball field and then the Carruthers. I say that right? We call it the Mack the soccer complex. They love I mean, you got the soccer team. Anytime I asked one of them about it. They're almost started crying. I mean, compared to what they have what they have now and then this baseball park. The whole of Ruston got to enjoy it back in the springtime when the baseball Gods just from some pennies from Heaven lot. Let tech place last 16 games of the season. In the cozy new love field. They finished up 42 and 20 they hosted the conscious a tournament in the NCAA baseball championship Ruston regional just a fabulous Back to Back Jack in text rich athletic history but the thing that made it so great was that rust and got participate text one championship before and it's been some other place. And here again after the tornado and the pandemic, the last 10 games were played in a free at last free at last atmosphere and the place was just jammed and in the outfield was awesome people sitting beyond the wall, but all of Ruston got to enjoy it. And probably one of the greatest days in tech athletic history was beating Southern Miss the rival twice after being behind both games on a just a glorious Saturday with everybody getting to feel part of it. concious a tournament and then getting beaten in the regional but not after making a run and then they got beat by NC State which advanced to the College World Series. So just a fantastic time. Last spring and a prelude to that by the way, your support was just so welcome and after some dry years in baseball, they got turned around back in 16 with a start with regional and since then they've won 3639 34 games in the tornado season in 42 this year so good for the Diamond Dogs a prelude to that was what basketball Did you mean what basketball did Gavin Mm hmm what they did they went on to the NIT and won it in the last moments Jr Lofton got the ball and made it it's just a spectacular playing find it on YouTube to cap this wonderful team's season 7674 victory over Colorado State and in in the summertime Jr got to be on Team USA and they won it by beating like they played over remember they play a lot a Latvia it takes a minute to get over there you can't you can't over it a Latvia

**Gavin Kelly**

not just across tech drive.

**Teddy**

These guys got to go halfway around the world. They won 8381 in the finals brought home gold Jr had 16 points and seven rebounds two assists and a steal in the finale and an all sudden everybody knew

who this kid was so you look at him he looks like he's supposed to be playing first base on your church softball team. He's he's got the baby fat and all this kind of stuff. And you say well, I can do that. Now. I'll send you to K McGuire says he's got these kung fu hands he's got Bowering of feet and just a joy to watch in the team which is eight and two now is really a fun team they love being together. They're actually funny as in haha, crack jokes funny they're so it's fun thing to watch. And they just started so that's somebody to support as we go into 2022

### **Tonya Oaks Smith**

And what are we doing? So baseball right now they're working on season tickets are they have they started working on season tickets? Yeah, that's something we should be on the lookout we

### **Teddy**

always want to call to 257-3631 which so we can get our Lady Techster basketball tickets or Dunkin dogs tickets and go ahead and look at getting season tickets in this new ballpark. You might want to get on the get on the ball 3631 She'll be ready when they start playing in February if you got a lot tech sports calm. You can find out all your information there. Click on baseball, see the scheduling do so a lot of tech 16 sports.

### **Tom Soto**

If you go if you get a lot of tech sports.com They launched a new website today. So check that out as well. If you see

### **Teddy**

any glitches, heaven forbid, call us and let us know. Nothing's perfect. We will have a ride in a couple days but a lot of little buttons to hit so sometimes a finger may slip but we'll have it worked out for and you should like to be should love the new the new site la tech sports.com.

### **Tonya Oaks Smith**

What so we talked a lot about sports. So let's so we have some research that is tied into sports, right? Kinesiology. So Dr. simians ski in our department of kinesiology does what kind of research

### **Gavin Kelly**

he's, he's with baseball players he's got he's got him hooked up. I mean, if you see a photo of it, they're hooked up to these machines and they got all these wires tied up to them, but they have pretty much their own private sort of pitching mound and other things over there where Kinesiology is got their home base. And they're able to do sports science, essentially, where they're, they're able to get into the physics of baseball, the pitching, throwing all that and they're able to track all that and help these student athletes tweak

### **Teddy**

its angles and span. And throughout. It's some some players have signed with Lambros in baseball, because of this sports performance deal that hopefully one day will be a standalone building. And people who play eighth graders shooter can come and they can, you know, see what their body's doing to anyway, it's very complicated, so complicated for you to just let Gavin speak on it, but I just thought I

would chime in and say it's, it's, it's it's not otherworldly, but it's the way that sports is going sports performance is going and using the science to get you where you want to go faster and keep from getting hurt.

**Gavin Kelly**

That's true, but there's a lot of really, really good research that is happening on our campus that involves students and involves our faculty. And that's just that's just a part of it. But we've had a lot of really great things happen this year in terms of research.

**Teddy**

And in terms of collaboration, yes, interdisciplinary collaboration, is that correct?

**Gavin Kelly**

I can't. That's the word. There you go. That's the word,

**Teddy**

a lot of syllables for me to put together.

**Tonya Oaks Smith**

It's research that's tied to text culture, right, because we work together and that that's the Kinesiology story is, you know, these people aren't doing the sports performance research on just Joe Average, they're doing it on people who will be professional athletes, right. And I think the research story of this year this past year is collaborative, interdisciplinary research that brings in a lot of grant dollars to our university, which is is pretty cool. One of the one of the first things that we hit on this year was the CSEA. Did I say that? Right? Okay. What they what they do research into is material science. So how do we make material stronger or perform better. And this is a research partnership with LSU and Louisiana Tech and some other universities designed to ensure that investments are smart investments, you know, roads last longer, things like that. And just recently, we started seeing some more news coming out of Jamie nit Dr. Jamie Newman's lab. Hard lab and students within that lab are partnering with scientists at Grambling State and the LSU Health Center in Shreveport to conduct some Coronavirus sampling to determine when variants appear. And so if somebody is diagnosed with COVID, they test positive that can go and share their samples. So we can see how COVID is traveling. And we also have students who are working on that that project helping to convince people to participate in the research because it's easy to do the research. But if you don't have samples, then you don't have the opportunity to do research. Right. So that's that's the interdisciplinary part of it that that I mean, I think is so cool. We're having a positive impact on health in our region. Right. Yeah, the health

**Teddy**

that also helped in, in Thank goodness for the rocker feller Foundation, which got on the front of the SEM, what they're trying to do is, yep, give us different strategies, figuring it out regionally and and sharing it with all the scientists everywhere. So that the next time something like this happens, which inevitably will will, will have a little will be one step closer to not being blind and have a little more a lot more information. And then again, that's thing with hundreds of people in the community have had to help to make it do right.

**Gavin Kelly**

So that's the cool thing about our research is that it breaks down borders, our research and our collaboration goes beyond our campus community. It helps it expands to our state, it has been our nation, it's all over the world. It even goes beyond our world and touches outer space.

**Kelly Cole**

Yeah, and speaking of that, Dr. Nesterov is She's an assistant professor of Biological Sciences here at Louisiana Tech in our College of Applied Natural Sciences and her lab has actually made this device that can actually help form radishes in space. And she'll take samples of those and study those down here to see how those radishes grow in space. And I think that that just shows you how our research is like you said going beyond those borders and even to the great beyond.

**Gavin Kelly**

So we're we're doing cool research on the ground and in the stars. And so we got it all covered.

**Teddy**

Well speaking of food, the best time to learn how to start eating right is when you're little fell in so our friend Dr. Julie Rutledge has. She's collaborated with some people at other universities in here for I think it's called being rich. Yes. And what you do is you take a preschooler and at school you coach them up on how to eat properly you know eat apple instead of a pork Ron or something like that. Eat a radish, although it's kind of painful a radish and stuff. The timeship similar way to start with something different than radishes and spice that didn't make me want to but that is fast enough. But she tried to coach up the little person so then when they go home and they go to the IGA store with their mom or dad, there'll be buying apples and oranges and hype teach told me that's not good for me. This is better to try to get the whole family to eat better. So that research his own going and benefit everybody

**Tonya Oaks Smith**

And it's a partnership with some of their colleagues at the University of Arkansas for medical sciences. So it goes into a neighboring state. And I think what what is another thing that's interesting about Dr. Rutledge is centers research is that. And frankly, the name in laboratory search is that it impacts health and wellness, and improves equity for health outcomes. Because one of the enrich centers, areas that they work with is Headstart programs. So you know, we're we're working on helping improve the health of low income people,

**Teddy**

they don't have enough information they don't know they don't have as much information as some of the others who are blessed and have a little bit more and have more access to health, the information for your mind and your and your body. So yeah, it's a wonderful vehicle that Julie and the gang are using to help start getting people's minds right when they're, you know, little bitty, and then that goes home and helps grandma and grandpa and everybody else.

**Tom Soto**

And it's not just the research and collaboration, I mean, that the student opportunities that we were able to have, are just outstanding. I mean, this year, we've, one of the big stories was the student managed investment fund in the College of Business. This Fund was established through the generosity of alumni and is managed by undergraduate students. So it's not just the graduate students that get to be research, there's a lot of undergrad research going on here as well. And this fund has had annual gains of 37%. In this market through COVID.

### **Gavin Kelly**

This wild market is it's real money that these kids are working with, they gave them they gave them some money and said make this into more money, essentially invest this and make smart. So it's, it's real kids who are in thank you for pointing that out. It's real kids who are in it's real kids who were in finance and are able to get hands on experience, but also, again, research, collaboration, student opportunities, it's all it's everywhere. And it's another aspect of the College of Business where that is, is in the real report. If you haven't had a chance to listen to our episode with Dr. Patrick Scott, he goes into that on his episode, because he oversaw that particular aspect of the College of Business. But Kelly, tell us a little bit more about about how that worked. Well,

### **Kelly Cole**

the real report, what it stands for is the regional economic analysis of Louisiana. So this is taking a look at the economic promises of Louisiana, and saying what we can do better to further those things in our state. And we had several Cobb students, I mean, one or two of my friends, Patrick Miller and Collins Vario. They both worked on this. And at the time, they were only juniors in economics. And they worked with Dr. Patrick Scott, to look into the economic output. And just take a look at that and see what we can do as Louisiana Tech to help the state grow and further any research in that area.

### **Teddy**

Another new thing that's on campus that we have that to me, absolutely fascinating is the hankley virtual anatomy lab. And that is in Carson title Hall. And it's about the size of a pool type. Yeah,

### **Gavin Kelly**

it's an anatomy table in there. And it's it's world class, it's world class.

### **Teddy**

It's people have donated their bodies to science, I think they have five so far. And then through because there's somebody smart somewhere, they figured out how to put all the veins and organs and it's 3d. They even this is to train doctors, and now you can cut and do sutures on it. More bodies will be on the way as soon as they're donated to science. They're working on a mouse wherever you do that, then you hit a button and boom it just you know an hour somewhere and it just goes to the inanimate thing. And there you got three more bodies also have a dog cat bats can study on it.

### **Tom Soto**

And our students from will be able to benefit through this. This is a pre vet pre med, biological sciences, kinesiology, nursing. All of these health science areas of our students will be able to use this personal anatomy lab. It's pretty cool.

**Gavin Kelly**

Y'all kind of played with the table, right? Yeah, Kelly?

**Kelly Cole**

Oh, absolutely. I was able to Yes, I was able and I'm not a stem person at all y'all so I was able to go and play on it this summer a little bit during one of the orientation weeks. And when I tell you I was enamored by this thing. I mean, it was amazing to also be Surrounded by Cannes students who are saying, oh, yeah, Kelly, that's a hemorrhage, about to happen in this body. And, and here's where the muscles are lacking in this human's body, and it was so interesting. And then you go to a puffer fish, and you get to see how a puffer fish lungs work and how they actually puff up. And, and that was, I think I had a smile never left my face when I was standing next to some of our canned students who were describing those things to me. So it is definitely an amazing opportunity. And I never failed to mention it when I'm doing a Louisiana Tech Tour, because I think that it just shows you the great opportunities that our students have to further their research and their success in their post grad and graduate careers here at Louisiana Tech.

**Teddy**

And if you're not in that career, by the way, you had me at puffer fish. If you're not an actor, you can still go see the table. Yes, absolutely. Yeah. So yeah, it'll educate you in some way.

**Tonya Oaks Smith**

Not only for class, though, that table is good. And they created a lab around that where students can come and study and they have the the little iPad check out library so they can take out and study with that screams on the wall. A wall. It is truly amazing. And it's funny that you say you ever by the you talk to recruitment wise, yes, we were looking at cars this past weekend. And I told the car salesman about it, his son is coming here and wants to be a doctor. So I think they'll sell it. Well, you know,

**Kelly Cole**

where some schools have, you know, cadaver labs, we have basically the same thing, but without the smell. It's digital.

**Tonya Oaks Smith**

So what else we have all these involved all these opportunities for students to take their learning and take it technology ways. Tell us what other opportunities do we have that are out there?

**Kelly Cole**

Well, there's always postgraduate success, and I am a graduate coming up here in the spring, I'll be graduating and communication. And there's always opportunities for at least communication students to get involved. We have Dr. Judith Roberts, who co owns the Lincoln Parrish journal and several communication students work with her. And I mean, I work here in the office with Tanya and we write stories upon stories upon stories about student success and research and involvement. But one thing that I was able to do this summer is talk with Shelby Gifford, who was a graduate of a master's in architecture this summer. And she graduated and was able to go fix it up with Chip and Joanna Gaines,

in Waco, Texas with an internship with them. And I actually went and looked on her Facebook, and she is still working for them. So it just shows you kind of like what shiplap it just kind of shows you like Gavin said earlier, our students are going beyond Louisiana Tech borders, and they're and not only to Texas, or Arkansas or Mississippi, but they're also going to Florida and New York. And we've had prominent alumni write books, and the list could go on, but it just shows you the postgraduate success that our students can achieve through all of this research and hard work that they do here at the institution. And I think that that just shows you the quality of the students and faculty staff administration that we have Louisiana Tech.

**Gavin Kelly**

Yeah, it's pretty special. If you couldn't tell from all the success stories we've just sort of ran through and there are plenty of them. And there's no shot that we weren't able to mention them all today. We hit some high points, but we're looking forward to next year. We're looking forward to have a lot of good things go on next year. And one of those things, just up top is the ASC Concrete Canoe competition

**Teddy**

possible.

**Gavin Kelly**

That's going to be our College of Engineering and Science is hosting. This is a this is going to be everyone's going to converge on the city of Reston for this concrete canoe competition. I know this engineering students are excited because it's a pretty big deal that's going to be in June 2022. So city resins gonna get a lot of visitors and a lot of people setting down some concrete canoes and some water here in the city. So Teddy, you got to go see it in person. So you can like you can,

**Teddy**

you know, visualize what it actually had looking forward to it. I got till June to get my concrete brining gear, hey, it's right around the corner here for you know what?

**Gavin Kelly**

So 2022 is, is gonna be if 2021 was any indication, it was filled with challenges, but it was also filled with lots of success stories and lots of promising foundation for the future of Louisiana Tech. And I don't know about you guys, but I'm looking forward to 2022

**Teddy**

Yes, in the meantime, you're University wishes you Merry Christmas. And we had this as your best year yet

**Gavin Kelly**

what he said. So that was our year in review. That was this is going to be our final beyond at night for episode of 2021. So thank you for joining us. We talked we mentioned a lot of stories here today that we have talked with other podcast guests on the beyond at 94 series. We've talked with Todd Castleberry and kinesiology, about his research and his student, Meredith Fisher. who's spoken with Dr. Patrick Scott, as I mentioned with the real report,

**Tom Soto**

we had an episode on the NCAA regional as well. And we can link back to these in the show notes as well as these articles that were written this year. We can talk about, excuse me link to those so that you can read them. Tell them where they can listen to the podcast and share with friends.

**Gavin Kelly**

You can listen anywhere you listen to podcasts. Our podcast is hosted on 1890 four.labtech.edu/podcasts. But we are available on Spotify on Apple podcasts on Google. Google podcasts has on Yeah, anywhere that you want to listen, you can listen to be on at 94. And please subscribe because we have covered a lot of great stories this year. We've got a lot of great stories today. And there's just more on the way next year.

**Tom Soto**

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**Gavin Kelly**

So follow us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, follow us on Instagram. Just keep up with Louisiana Tech because if you don't, you're missing out on the things that are happening here like we talked about today. And you don't want to miss out because this is a special University and you just got a little taste of what's happening today. So more to come. Thank you for joining us on me on 8094. We'll see you next time.

**Gabrielle Crockett**

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