

106. Gary Kennedy: Once, Twice, Sold

Gavin Kelly

Gavin, hey everybody. You're listening to beyond 1894 this is the official podcast of Louisiana Tech University. I'm Gavin Kelly from the Office of University Communications, and we are wrapping up our sort of summer into fall Dean series that we've been going over these past few episodes with, our fifth and final College of this sequence of episodes the College of Applied natural science and Dean, Dr Gary Kennedy. Dr Kennedy, thank you for joining us here today.

Gary Kennedy

Thank you, Gavin. Appreciate your offer to come talk to you. Yeah, yes, sir.

Gavin Kelly

So some of the deans we've had various levels. I mean, you think about Dr Pichon, brand new dean here, right? And some of the leadership positions here, I've had kind of more longevity over the years, and you've been here at Tech for some time, right? Correct? Yeah, 27 years. Okay, so first of all, congratulations on that. It's a long time to be anywhere, but I think that means you've got a lot of history, and you've kind of seen some growth and some changes here on campus that I think you can talk about. So let's go back 27 plus years ago. Talk to me about, you know, deciding where you wanted to go to college, and deciding on kind of the educational pathway you were going to take, and what those factors were, and kind of those, those early beginnings of your career. Yeah,

Gary Kennedy

I grew up in in rural union parish, about 25 miles north of here. And my brothers, Mike Kennedy, is three years older than me, and he went to what was in NLU. And of course, I had to go to Louisiana Tech. But no, my you know, my dad always and my mom both, they always encouraged us to to go to college. And so my dad was always high on Louisiana Tech. He was an Air Force recruiter. Actually, Tech was one of his schools, and he he was doing that in the late 60s, when the Vietnam war was going on, and he actually had an office over here that he would come to about once a week. And he didn't have any trouble back then getting people to go into the Air Force, because with the Vietnam War going on, lot a lot of young men especially wanted to go into air force rather than the army or Marines or some other branch. So so that that was pretty easy for him, but one thing that he in working the colleges in North Louisiana, he he got over to us, was that Louisiana Tech was a cut above. And so what I was interested in, as well agriculture and animal science back then it, you know, it had a great program, great reputation. And so it to me, it wasn't a hard decision to come to Louisiana Tech. And when I was growing up, you know, when I first, my parents first started letting me go out of town driving a vehicle. And when I was a teenager, one, one thing that my dad would let me do, he would let me he would let me take his old truck and and some of my friends would come, and we would go to the Louisiana Tech football game. Okay, so that that kind of got me going there as well, and just the atmosphere and it felt like home. And so Tech has always felt like home to me. Yeah,

Gavin Kelly

you I've brought this up before. I'm if anyone's a regular listener, they're going to feel like it's a broken record, maybe. But I've mentioned that that phrase almost verbatim, feels like home. I mean, we've talked to students, alumni, faculty, staff members, over more than 100 episodes of this and over many years and ones, especially ones who came to tech as a student, have been in the area of since then, or maybe came back soon after, and have worked at Tech or been around the tech, quote, unquote, family for a long time. They use that same phrase almost every time is it feels like home and it feels like a community. So it's always interesting to hear sort of a backstory behind some variation of

Gary Kennedy

that, right? And I don't think it's so much the facilities or the buildings or any you know that you know that it has there. There's some effect there as well. But for me, it was, it was the faculty and the staff, and they always wanted to help you. They always wanted to help you get to a higher level and think about things. When I went through my undergrad program and, you know, going to graduate school was not on my radar, I didn't know anything about graduate school, didn't didn't really think about it, but some of my professors talked to me about graduate school, and, you know, suggested that I think about it and look at it and, and so, you know, I did that, and, you know, did a master's at Tech as well, okay, and, and so it just, you know, put me on a career path. That I that I didn't, I wouldn't be on otherwise, if, if those faculty had not taken the time and effort to just talk to me, you know, and going through as an undergrad, I had pretty good grades, but, you know, I, I guess I didn't really have an end game in mind at the time, and so they, they helped me get on a track and and that, you know, that really changed my life. So I think that's just part of Louisiana Tech, and that's part of, you know, our legacy is that strong interaction between the faculty and the students.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, decades later, not much has changed in that regard, right? That's right. So okay, so grad school at Tech, and then a doctorate soon after that, what was the sort of Yeah, I

Gary Kennedy

went to work. Actually, after I finished my undergrad, I went to work with LSU Ag Center. So I was assistant county agent in Bosch Parish, and, you know, in working on a Master's at the same time I got you and so I actually resigned from that job and finished my master's. And then when I finished, I went back into the same position with a little bit of a pay raise and but I knew I wanted to do a PhD at that time, and so I worked another six months or so, and then I got an offer for an assistantship in Ag Economics at LSU. So I moved from Boshier down to Baton Rouge, and went through that program, and which was, you know, I thought, when I went down there, I thought, well, I could go, I can do four years in Baton Rouge, not my favorite place, but I can do it. And but, you know, when I got down there, I found that I really liked Baton Rouge a lot more than I anticipated. I liked the culture, I liked the the history, and, you know, I met my wife, and we got married about halfway through my program. She also worked for LSU Ag Center at the time, and so that just, it just all kind of naturally came together. And so I finished there. And when I finished there, I wanted to go to Louisiana, tech. I wanted to come back here, come back. But Tech had an opening. But they, they it. They couldn't hire anybody at the time. It was, it was kind of, I guess, frozen and so, but NLU or Ulm had had a position open, so I went to work there. My brother enjoyed that, and and my dad's sister, my aunt, was actually faculty member in

nursing at the time, and so that was kind of nice. But I went there for 18 months, and during that and that was fine, that I enjoyed my time there it was, it was, it was a good situation. But during that time, text position opened, and so I was applied for it, and was able to get to tech. So,

Gavin Kelly

okay, and that was like a teaching position, a professor position. Yeah,

Gary Kennedy

it was, yeah, Assistant Professor of agricultural business. So, yeah. So what point

Gavin Kelly

I'm always interested to know, because often, you know, you talk to someone who goes into a certain major, and then they have certain career plans after half the time, maybe more than half the time. They don't always necessarily bank on teaching eventually, at what point during your career, did you think I want to be in a faculty position at a university and teach with this background I have in something that has, you know, many different career paths ways ahead of me? How is teaching factoring into that?

Gary Kennedy

Yeah, yeah. Well, you know, while I was at Tech, working on my MBA, so my master's in business administration, I, you know, the my fellow grad students that were going through that program with me, they, they kept asking me, Where are you going to go do your doctorate and, and where you know you're going to eventually teach somewhere where? What's your plan there? And, and I kept saying, No, that's not really my plan. I'm going to do the MBA, and I may go to work for Farm Credit or or commercial bank or something like that. I said, I don't, I don't really think I'm going to do that. But I had several friends keep telling me, You're too academic. You, you like you, you, you love campus life too much just being on campus and and they were right, yeah, figured out, yeah. So you know when I when I left, when I graduated, and I went back to work for LSU. Accent. Or, yeah, I started thinking about it and and decided, yeah, that's really probably what you know. It just seemed natural to me. So I talked to Dr Guidry, Leo Guidry, who was head of the Department of Ag business, Ag Economics at LSU, and visited with him several times, because working for LSU Ag Center. I was down in Baton Rouge a lot anyway, and so I would go by there and visit with him, and he was very encouraging. And he he said, Yeah, if you'll come, we'll give you an assistantship, and you can do this. And so So I that's what I did. And I worked my research that, you know, my dissertation, what I worked on there was rural land values. And, you know, it fit my, you know, I always had an interest in in finance, that was my specialty, with my MBA. So it fit well with that. And my major professor there at LSU, Lonnie Vanderveer, he, he did a great job of helping me get through. And we, you know, we did a project that had not been done as far as addressing land values, crop land, timber land, pasture land, rural land values in Louisiana, not much work had been done ever and so in the work that had been done was like 20 years prior. So it was, it was timely, and it was very interesting and and very rewarding, you know, for me and so and I kept doing that once I came, you know, when I came back here to Tech, I kept doing that research and being involved up until I went into administration, and then, you know, I kind of missed that, right, that part of it. But, yeah, well, it's

Gavin Kelly

like your friend said, very academic. Yeah. So, all right, give us a kind of a year on the timeline here. So what year was it when you came back here to tech, when in that faculty position, what that was 1997 Okay, right? So some, some, and I think you were telling me before the podcast to your, your faculty ID pictures, is from, is from that? Yeah, right, yeah. When you get a good one,

Gary Kennedy

why let it go, right? That's right. Hadn't changed. So

Gavin Kelly

walk us through kind of the, kind of the movement, because you've been near tech since, but I know that, like, like you said you got into administration, the positions have changed. I mean, you're Dean now, so kind of walk us through that process and kind of those steps in that, in that ladder, yeah,

Gary Kennedy

so, so I was, you know, I was faculty. It what was NLU, then, you know, for about 18 months, and came to tech, and then for about three years, I was, you know, Assistant Professor went up for tenure, got tenure, and promotion, went to associate professor the department, head in Agricultural Sciences At the time, Mike Gould, he retired, he left. And so the Dean asked me to be interim department head at that time. And so I agreed to do it while we did a search. And so in that process, you know, I got some encouragement to apply for the full time position. So I did. And so I became department head of Ag Sciences in, I think, around July of 2000 Okay, and at that time, you know, I guess the department, it was not, you know, today, it's the school of Agricultural Sciences and forestry. But at that point, it was agricultural sciences as a separate department, and forestry was a separate department and but it so it, it was, it was, it was very interesting to me, and it was very I found that I enjoyed that more than I anticipated that I would being department head was very rewarding, because we as a group, we were able to do some things that that really helped students, and some things that, you know, we as far as developing some scholarship funds and developing some activities that that are going that continue on today. So that was very rewarding. So I was department head for 15 years. Okay, wow, yeah, so that's a long time for department head. And then in 2014 the Dean's position here that the dean, James liberatus was the dean of applied Natural Sciences at the time he retired in 2014 and so, yeah, so I applied for Dean and went through that process and started in 2015 June of 2015 so this, this June will be 10 years. Yeah.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, wow. So I kind of don't know where to start, so I'll just leave it in a kind of open ended, loaded question. And you can kind of talk up to current day and kind of mention some some program changes within the college, but talk about, maybe not even just in your almost 10 years as dean, but in your in your time back here at Tech since 97 how you've seen ans kind of change and shift and grow and kind of the current state of things, and, like I said, kind of maybe some programs that have been moved around, things like that now. But what have you seen over those, these last couple decades in the college, yeah, you

Gary Kennedy

know, when I came to tech and graduated with my undergrad, I graduated from the from the College of Life Sciences, okay, and, and so it that process to become the the College of Applied natural sciences happened In 1996 the year before I came back okay, and the College of Life Sciences merged with the what was then the College of Human Ecology to become applied in natural sciences. So that that was a big change when I came back here as a faculty member, because my, you know, my the college, I was familiar. What you knew as a student was the landscape had changed. Yeah, it had changed. It wasn't drastically different, because a lot of those elements were still there, but, but, you know, human ecology had, had come in, and it was a good fit. And so, you know, and that that went on for many years now, in the in the past year, that has changed. So we've had the School of Human Ecology, two thirds of it exit the College of Applied Natural Sciences and go to the College of Education and Human Sciences. So that was the Human Development Family Science and the fashion merchandising Retail Studies programs. Those two exited the college under the umbrella of the School of Human Ecology, now part of the human School of Human Ecology, which is Nutrition Dietetics, stayed with us and went into the School of Biological Sciences, so that that that's been a change, and the reason behind that was just trying to better align programs to in areas for a better fit, for better synergy. Much, much of Human Ecology is early childhood education and in human development, Family Science, and that fits well with the, you know, the College of Education changed their name from education to Education and Human Sciences so that those portions really fit now the Nutrition Dietetics kind of fit better with biology. They you know, the feeling was that was a better fit there, rather than going into the College of Education Human Sciences. And then, in addition to that, we've had speech language pathology and audiology come from the College of Liberal Arts into the College of Applied natural sciences. So they they created, just over the summer, created the School of Communication Sciences and Disorders, which is specifically speech language pathology, an undergrad and a master's program, and then a doctorate in audiology. And that fits well with our college, because they're, they're science based, very applied, very hands on. They fit very well with our health sciences within, within the College of Applied natural sciences. And you know, they talk the same language that we talk they do clinicals. They, you know, they have similar equipment needs. And, you know, it's just very, very they have come in and just they fit very well, yeah. So, so I think, you know, although change is always concerning, you know, for anybody, I think these changes are going to be positive all the way around. I think, yeah, and

Gavin Kelly

it's, you know, it's, it's balanced, right? You know, you're not, you're not getting rid of stuff. It's kind of just like, again, changing the landscape and shifting things around to make more sense. I think when we're in an era of advancement and innovation happening so rapidly in every field, it gets harder and harder to define and box in programs into a certain college, and there's kind of gray areas between them all. And so it's like we just do the best we can and trying to fit them into one of our five colleges here. But that's right, it's an ongoing thing, right? I'm sure in five years we'll be talking about this program moving. Here and here and here and you know, things will be going up from there, right? You mentioned a few of the programs within ans. Let's talk about a couple of the kind of big, premier programs that are big drivers for you guys. We'll start with nursing. I know that, you know, we've had a couple of good episodes of this podcast on nursing. We've had some good guests on to talk about nursing here at Louisiana Tech. Very successful lineage, very good history there in nursing NCLEX

Gary Kennedy

RN, which is a national test to become a registered nurse. Yeah. So our pass rates have historically been very high, and, you know, we've been named Outstanding program in the state, you know, several times. And so it's historically, you're right. It's, it's been a great program, our our nursing program, that that we've had is, has been a an Associate of Science, right? And the only associate program on on TX, main campus, so, and that's great. But you know, most, most students that go through and they complete the program, they do, they they become an RN. The next step is to, is to complete a BSN bachelor science, nursing, so and and there are a lot, you know, there are several programs around that allow them to do that at other universities and so. But our thought behind this developing, this RN to BSN program, is to allow our students while they're at Tech to prep for that and to have a seamless pathway to achieve a BSN. And for our ASN students, what we historically ran into with them is they would complete and they would have tops money left, you know, right on the table. And, or they would have and, or they would have scholars, other scholarships that they are there, you know, they would, you know, because they finished with an associate's degree, yeah, two years worth of stuff in science. And so they would, they would basically leave things on the table, and then it, you know, and typically they would go practice somewhere and, and then, part time, pick up the BSN, but, but, but doing that, they would often leave a lot of those resources behind. And, and so students have, you know, I mean, they've always been concerned about that. We've been concerned about that. And there's such a demand for BSNs, for, you know, for nurses in general, Orions in general, but, but BSNs in particular, that we wanted to to provide that opportunity for students and do the best we can for for our students that come here. So, you know, it was a long process to get that approved and, you know, and that's, you know, because there's other programs that are relatively close, Ulm Grambling, Northwestern State, they have, they have BSN programs. So why would we need another one here? But the demand is out there. I mean, demand is so great, and nursing shortage, there's such a shortage that, yeah, it to us. It made sense. It's just we're, you know, to bet to best prepare the students coming out of Louisiana Tech. So the Board of Supervisors agreed with us, and so they, they approved the program, and it was, it was officially approved last spring. So we actually opened the program in the spring quarter of 2024 and you know, it's amazing to me, but we'll, we'll graduate our first students in the fall of 2024, we'll have, right now, it looks like we'll have 11 students graduate with that PSN, and the reason they can do that, those 11 can do that, is they had, they had already taken the course, a lot of courses there, so they only have to take a few additional courses because they were already preparing themselves to do that anyway. So, but going forward, you know, we're typically graduating. We graduate two classes of nursing students per academic year, and so that's usually around 100 to 110 maybe 120 nursing students. So a good many of those will be going right into that PSN and and going forward. And

Gavin Kelly

it keeps, you know, it keeps Tech students at tech at a place where you can. Continue to kind of nurture and and grow them, and kind of help to guide them towards the career they want. So that's always good to keep them around, right, right? And

Gary Kennedy

we have a great faculty there. I mean, the faculty are there. They're very hard working people, and they're and they're all about preparing these students to become very competent and successful

nurses. And so I can't say enough about that, that school, that that area, and yeah, so they, they, they do a great job. Yeah,

Gavin Kelly

got a good nursing program here, that's for sure. Let's talk about kind of another, another big area of the college, Ag Sciences and forestry. Nevermind being an important program anywhere. We're in Louisiana, where forestry specifically is a big driver of the economics of the state, and it does a lot for kind of the operations of things down here. And it makes the program, you know, maybe more important than it might be in another context you know. So talk about, kind of the School of Ag Sciences and forestry, maybe at large. But then we're also going to talk about the forest products Innovation Center, which is a very exciting, very important, upcoming thing that I know has a lot of the students on South Campus really excited. So tell us about that, that stuff. Yeah,

Gary Kennedy

so the school of Agricultural Sciences and forestry, there are four degree programs within that school. There's animal science and pre veterinary medicine to be part of that, and we're very well known for that. We have a premier program there that kind of like nursing. We do a great job in preparing students to go on to veterinary school, and we have a high placement rate with acceptance rate in in veterinary schools. And that's, that's one of our larger programs in the college. And we also have ag business, which is a great program that's aimed at General agriculture. It's, you know, it's got two concentration. One is a business concentration, and we have a lot of students that go into the finance area with Farm Credit or commercial banking and that kind of thing in in rural areas and and also a plant science concentration, which, you know, is focused on all kinds of plant science, including row crops as well as ornamentals. And you know, we, of course, everyone knows, most everyone knows we do the poinsettias and greenhouse, oh yeah, all the greenhouse activities at Tech. So you know that that covers a large swath of of agriculture. And then we also have forestry. And you know, we have a forest management program there, as well as a wildlife concentration and then there's also a geographic information science program, GIS, which is the technology and using maps, and, you know, all the technology to manage natural resources, it's amazing what they can do there remote sensing, some some work with drones and that type of thing. And it's really, it's really a program that adds a lot and really works well with our forestry program. So, you know, it kind of all works together there. So we have a very comprehensive school of Agricultural Sciences and forestry, which, I mean, if you look at the disciplines there, you know, most you know, larger universities would call it a college. So we call it a school just, you know, given the size of it and how it, how it fits in at tech, but, but, you know, it could be a college agricultural sciences and forestry So, but it's a great area. We have a total of somewhere around 400 students in all those programs on South Campus. And so it's, it's where I got my undergrad. So it's, you know. So it's, you know, it's a great program with with forestry, you know, we're right in the middle of the Deep South, and we're right in the middle of timber country. And so historically, we've, we've concentrated on forest management and and that's, that's the strong that is. You know, our program, and it's very strong. But you know, given Tech's history, if you look at Tech. In the last 20 years, we've developed our enterprise campus right so we have, we're working with the industry. We have a lot of companies right here on campus. And in looking at that, you know, I talked to Dr les GEIS, President GEIS, back when I first became Dean and. And, you know, we talked about that and, and he asked, you know, do you have any vision for for that area? And, you know, I started telling him, what I'd

like to see is we need a forestry lab building that's that, that where we have the capability to to work with research related to wood products and and expand a little bit from from what we've been doing. And so he got excited about that, because he was all about the enterprise campus, you know. And so it really fit well. So we started working with that. And so we, we pitched that idea to some of the industry in the area. And royal Martin is a company in Alexandria that there's a lot of tech alums and that work there. And Roy Martin, the third is, you know, his family owns that business, and he they had done a great job, you know, going back 100 years with that, and he became excited about it as well. He's a big LSU supporter, but he supports tech as well. So they were our lead contributor there. And so we, we approached the state about it. And so the state of Louisiana agreed to put up on a \$15 million project to develop a forest products Innovation Center. They have put up ten million and so we have to raise the other 5 million. And so royal Martin put up 2 million right right off. That helps. That got us started. Gary Hill, with warehouse, has been a champion force and has come in as well. Warehouse gave us a big, big gift, Hunt force products here in town, trot hunt and that group that they've been great supporters as well. So and then even, even the pipes Foundation, which is a small local foundation, really, with a lot of timberland, kind of based in forestry area, they came up with a large contribution for us. 250 right? Yeah, 250,000 Yeah, nice and and so we have another company, resource management service that's, you know, what? They support scholarships for us. And so they, they came in as well. And then we have about, I guess, 20 other smaller donations and supporters and and we're still working on that. So right now, we've raised right at 4 million. So we're, we're the last part that we need to raise is about a million dollars. Now the state in this year's this year's legislature, in 2024 they moved four and a half million to priority one. So that's cash available to us now. And then they're going to do a bond issue October one of this year. In a few weeks, they'll do a bond issue for the rest of the state's portion, and then we'll we'll have to come up with our portion by around November one. So, so, yeah, we're looking we're looking good there. And we've got some other companies that have verbally told us they're going to come in,

Gavin Kelly

yeah, knocking at the door. I mean, yeah, it's not if, it's when, yes, point, yeah,

Gary Kennedy

it so I you know, it looks like we're going to probably have a early 2025, groundbreaking, yeah, which will

Gavin Kelly

be here before we know it, yeah, talk a little bit about that forest products Innovation Center, kind of, what is the goal, how it's going to fund? I mean, I've seen the renderings, the plans for the building. It's going to be a beautiful building, but what's going to go on in that building that's going to elevate that program and the programs

Gary Kennedy

in it, yeah? And the, you know, some neat things about it is, it's part of it is, is engineered wood products, okay, but other parts of it is, is working with wood residuals, which you know you've got low quality, high fiber residuals that that most wood products, any, any company that's working with wood products they have left over that they need to do something with, and they have high volumes of it. You

know, wood ash is a good example. And they're looking to do something with it. You don't waste it, right? Yeah, well, they, if, you know, they don't want to put it in the landfill. They don't want to, it's too expensive to haul around, so they're, you know, so it's there, and it's in, typically there, that's and that's a, you know, when talking to all the different forestry companies in the last three years or so, that's probably the most common problem. You know, common denominator. So we have, we have some faculty that are interested in that area, that are already doing work in that area, as well, as well as engineered wood products, as you know. So the the lab that we're building, the, you know, the the center that we're building will have a suite of four chemistry based analytical labs. It'll have an engineered wood products lab, and then it'll have a testing lab, which will which we're we can test wood products and test anything we develop. And that's something that is not common. Some universities have have testing labs, but not not around here, not in the in the central South. Yeah. So we went to the American plywood associations, their facilities in Tacoma, Washington. Saw what they did. They're interested in working with us. They're interested in, you know, if we might want to become a certified testing lab. There's only one university that has a certified testing lab that's Wisconsin, okay? And and I found out the reason why in that is that it's, it's just very involved to have a certified testing lab so but that's something we're considering, and I think it would, it would fit well with with this building and in a lot of the industry partners that we're working with, they, they are very interested in us having those capabilities to do testing right now, they have to send samples off to, you know, different places, to, you know, out of state, to do any kind of testing. So they, you know, third party test. That's, that's here, it would be great, yeah. So very

Gavin Kelly

convenient, yeah, yeah. And, you know, once you're you're sort of changing the game, quote, unquote, of of the timber industry by finding out what to do with those, you know, those timber leftovers. If Louisiana Tech and that, that forest products Innovation Center and the faculty and the students are working on that, are kind of the forerunners of that kind of innovation, it's a big deal,

Gary Kennedy

right? And we have forestry faculty working on that. But we also, we are also partnering with, like Dr Joan Langham, and she is the head of chemical engineering. And you know, there are some other professors as well that we're partnering with that, that, do you know, different have different areas of expertise. And it's not, it's not just forestry faculty. We have some forestry faculty that are involved with it, but it we're really looking across disciplines and colleges and to, you know, to do this, it's

Gavin Kelly

a group effort, yeah,

Gary Kennedy

Dr Henry Cardenas and in engineering as well, mechanical engineering, he does a lot of the structural engineering wood products as well. He's got some some projects going on that actually strengthen wood products, okay, and preserve wood products from from insect damage or from from disease, or rod or, you know, water making them water resistant, and that kind of thing. So there's a lot of, there's a lot of innovation there. Yeah, that's already going on at Louisiana Tech that

Gavin Kelly

Center's just going to enhance it. It's just going to make it, make it easier to do this. This might be slightly off topic, but because you mentioned Dr Lyonna by name, and because this is recent, our office just put this story out about it. She's got a team working on creating sustainable soilless plants, taking like human urine and filtering it to where you get water, and then the waste that comes out of it is fertilizer for plants, and that's going to innovate, like being able to grow plants in space and on the moon without soil. And just think that that's very fascinating and very crazy, but just sort of an indicator of the type of work being done and the fact that she's doing that project, and she's working on the project, like you mentioned. And you know, the faculty here are very widespread, and it, it really does take everybody, it takes a village, to kind of get a lot of the research done around here. So, right? It's always good to see collaborative innovation. Yes, we

Gary Kennedy

have a lot of talented faculty that it's just amazing. And not only were they talented, they're just, they're great people to work with. Yeah, yeah.

Gavin Kelly

Okay, you set me up because you said talented. So we're going to talk about your maybe it's, it's a hidden talent for some so we're going to, before we let you go talk to me about because I don't know the backstory. So talk to me about how you. You even came to realize that you could do auctioneering. Is that the right word for it? Right? Right? So being able to sort of be the voice at the auctions as driving things along. How long have you been doing that? How did that start? How is that something you realize you can do? And then we'll put you on the spot and give us a sample, but talk to me about that. Yeah, this

Gary Kennedy

year will be 40 years that I've been my goodness, okay, and it started when I was an undergrad at Tech, okay, so, you know, my family, we had cattle and horses, and my dad and I, we would go to livestock auctions, cattle auctions, horse auctions. And so there, you know, I Hamilton, it was a premier livestock auctioneer, I mean, known nationwide worldwide. Got an expo center, and you got the Expo Center in West Monroe, named after him, but he would do most of these registered livestock sales in the in the south. And at the time, when I was an undergrad, Mr. Ike was in his late, mid to late 70s, and he was still going strong, but he couldn't see as well, so he didn't like driving, especially at night, and so he asked me if I would drive for him to some of these sales, because I was going to a lot of them anyway. And he would fly to sales that were off, you know, Washington State or Oregon or something like that. But the sales in Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, he would ask me if I would drive. So it was a great job for me as an undergrad, because, you know, it didn't interfere with anything in my classes at all, and because all these sales were on Saturdays and so. And usually we would leave on Friday. And so I just started doing that. And so just started helping with that, and just got involved with that, and and just found that, you know, I had a knack for doing it. I could do it, you know. And so that's, that's how it got started. And so, yeah, and so I, you know, I did that even in when I, when I finished tech and going on to work for LSU Ag Center, I continued to do it, to continue to, you know, occasionally I didn't do it, like full time, but I just, you know, occasionally, still get some chances to do it today, right? Like we still do, yeah, I got one coming up November the fifth, with the faculty staff club,

right? We'll be doing a food pantry auction. We've done that the last several years where we raise money for our food pantry on on Tech campus. And athletics does a great job with us, because they'll donate a lot of football helmet signed basketballs, tickets to sporting events, parking passes, a lot of things like that. And we do this in November. A lot of people will come and they'll buy these items for Christmas presents, right? They have tech fans in there, in the bookstore. Bookstore has been great Barnes and Noble they they donate items to us as well. And so we do that. And so it raises money for the, you know, for the pantry. It's good cause. We also do a poinsettia auction, right? We sell our poinsettias and raise money for scholarships. And we do a livestock auction in in the spring last year I did the first pitch baseball auction when we sold some things to raise money for the baseball team.

Gavin Kelly

You get to keep in practice at same time. Yeah, yeah. It's

Gary Kennedy

enough to keep me in practice. Yeah, yeah. So, well,

Gavin Kelly

I mean, let's I, I don't know what the protocol is for this. Well, do you mind giving us a sample, letting us letting us know what it sounds like on the on the auction floor? Yeah,

Gary Kennedy

I don't mind. It works a little better if you're, if you got something to sell and you got an audience that you know, sure, okay, how about I'll,

Gavin Kelly

I'll throw my I'll be the you'll be the bitter. I'll be I'll be bidding. I'll throw my hands out, bid against yourself. Yeah, that's fine. Oh, that's

Gary Kennedy

okay.

Gavin Kelly

I'll decide when it's when it gets too much for me to betting it to bid against me. I'll give it a rest. But should we invent something to sell? Should we sell something that's in the room? I don't know. What do you think? Well,

Gary Kennedy

let's, let's, does it last? Well, it doesn't really matter. Let, let's just sell a signed tech football by Terry Brad, okay, beautiful, classic. Yeah, I don't you know that would bring no telling what, but we'll just it'll bring something, right? Sure. Okay, signed football by the great Terry Bradshaw, alright. Say here now that I'm ready to get 500 where 500 out of the bid? Yes, I have here now a quarter, five and a quarter. Now that I get five and a quarter, five and a quarter now, half here. Now that are ready to go, 550 At 550, now, yes, he did. Now that did he go? 575, at 575, bid. Now, that did he go? 575, now, 600, at 575, now, six at six here, now, quarter, six and a quarter. Now, that did he go? Six and a half? Yes, he

did. Now that he goes, six and a half. Now, 675, yes, he did. Now that everybody did it. He goes, 675, at 675, yes, he did. I knew he would. He had that look in his eye at 675, now, 700 700 out of the bid now, but did he go? Seven, here now, but did he go? Seven, all through now, the Did he go? Yes, he did. Now, seven, now, a quarter, seven or a quarter, now, half here, now, 75 at seven and a half here, now, 75 now, 800 now that everybody. Did he go? Eight, eight, here now. But did he go? Eight? All through? Seven. Done. I have sold it 775, right here to Gavin.

Gavin Kelly

All right, dude, that was fun. I enjoyed that very much. You bet. Oh, man, it's

Gary Kennedy

like I was, you can just write your check. Yeah, I

Gavin Kelly

gotta get that football. Gotta get that signed football from somewhere. Well, I appreciate that absolutely. I mean, like, like you said you've been doing it at events that probably have a lot of faculty and staff and students present. So you know, I'm sure a fair number of people know that you're capable of doing that, but I hope, if you're listening, you got as much enjoyment out of that as I did. Dr Kennedy, we appreciate you making time for us today on the podcast. The State of the College of Applied natural sciences is sounds very promising, very exciting. I think one thing, I guess, I can leave you with an actual final question, since you've been here for so long and again, some of the changes we've talked about that you've seen as we go into again, we're 2025, and things like the forest products Innovation Center, you know? What keeps you excited? How do you how do you stay in this position, in a dean position, and then continue to be excited about the college? What kind of keeps you going? In that regard,

Gary Kennedy

keeps me from becoming a no chromogen, sure. Yeah, I tell you what I've got. I've got the best associate deans, the best department heads and academic unit directors and the best faculty that anybody could ask for. And these, these folks are hardworking people across the college, and they have great ideas. They're very student oriented. They're, you know, and that keeps you going, because, you know, knock on wood, I don't deal with a lot of of problems. I deal with a lot of innovative ideas and and we just have a great group. And then the students within the college are, are great students we attract into this college, students that that are high caliber. I mean, they and they do amazing things so, and I think that's true of most students at Tech in general. But you know, and I think we're well supported and we're well supported by the administration, despite, you know, budget constraints at the state level, we we're still very well supported by by the our upper administration, and we're very well supported by the Louisiana Tech Foundation as well. We had the people in foundation and our development officers are working hard every day to to raise extra money for so we can do things we couldn't do otherwise. And so I can't say enough for Product Center Penny Humphreys has worked with on raising money for that, and she's a great development officer, and like say, within, within the college, Jamie Newman's an Associate Dean with us, and Donna hoods and associate dean. They are, they are hardworking, innovative individuals that that just make it, make it fun for me to be a dean. And so I feel very fortunate. Yeah,

Gavin Kelly

that's good. Well again. Thanks again for making time for us. Thanks for bringing us home on the Dean series with ans. Again. We just, we just started a new school year. It's, it's fall quarter 2024, so go have a good one.

Gary Kennedy

You too. Gavin, thank you. Thank you. Go Dogs.

Gavin Kelly

Go Dogs.

Gavin Kelly

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