

135. Landyn Jones and Riley Jones: It's Electric

Gavin Kelly

Hey, everybody, you're listening to Beyond 1894. This is the official podcast of Louisiana Tech University. My name is Gavin Kelly from the Office of University Communications. And our two guests for this episode come to us from Union Board, our president and vice president of Union Board at the time, Riley Jones and Landyn Jones. No relation, but they are related in the sense that they are the top of the exec staff of union board. So Riley, Landyn, thanks for being a part of the podcast today. So this is kind of, we're kind of making a habit of having the union board, President, Vice President, podcast to talk about kind of their experiences as being a part of the student organization. But also we kind of want to get to know you guys a little bit to figure out kind of why union board was something that you were led to in your college career. So let's take it back before college. Riley, why don't you start by telling us kind of where you're from, and then why Tech was the college you decided on when the time came.

Riley Jones

So I'm from Fort Worth Texas, which is a long ways away, and I had a hard time figuring out where I wanted to go to college. I was wanting to be a music major at the time, and it got to a point where Tech was just one of the schools, coincidentally, that was going to offer me money they had, like, a growing music department, and so yeah, I chose tech, and then I came here for orientation, and me and Landon were actually in the same orientation group, and we approached the union board table at organizational browse together. There's a picture of us at it. And fate happened, right? And that's where it started.

Gavin Kelly

So coming from, Fort Worth, you know, we talked to a lot of students who come from out of state, and there are lots of things that make that appealing, getting an out of state fee waiver, whatever it may be, but that sort of East Texas area, that Dallas Fort Worth area, we do try to draw a lot of students in from there. You mentioned tech being appealing for certain reasons. Was there other? Was there ever like, was TCU an option? Like, were you looking local, or did you want to get away from home a little bit?

Riley Jones

My main goal when I was applying for schools was to get out of Texas. That was my one thing. I just I wanted to get out. I applied to like, seven different schools, and then I only applied to one school in Texas out of those seven, and it was Uta. And it was just because my parents asked me to, but I knew I wanted to get

Gavin Kelly

out. Are you so you said you wanted to study music? Are you still or have you since changed

Riley Jones

past a little bit? I did change the digital marketing the beginning of my sophomore year. Okay?

Gavin Kelly

And what was kind of the thought process? A lot of students, they switch majors, and they think like, they worry. I've talked to plenty of students who like weren't going to switch at all because they're like, they feel like they feel like they waste time or whatever, but it's a good thing to like, find you know what you want to do and what you think you want your future to be about. So what was the thought process behind music to marketing? Did that was that natural, or was that something that you had to think about?

Riley Jones

It was I definitely thought on it for a really long time. I always knew kind of what I wanted to work in, but it was kind of just like, what field, I guess, like, I knew when I wanted to work in music. I wanted to work event planning and marketing no matter what. But I just decided to change change to digital marketing, because it was broader. It was I probably would find a job easier, and then it also probably would look better on a diploma.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah? So I'm starting to piece together music marketing, union board, event planning, entertainment like I'm seeing, I'm seeing a vision here. Do you like concerts? Yeah, I'm guessing that would be a fun field to work in. What do you kind of hope to do after graduation? First of all, let me ask, because I didn't ask, because I didn't ask, how much school do you have left?

Riley Jones

I will graduate in May of this year. Okay, so it's coming. Yes, I hate this question.

Gavin Kelly

I hate, like, the Where do you see yourself in five years? Or, like, what are you gonna do through graduation? But I am gonna ask you, do you have plans after May? Or kind of, what do you see happening?

Riley Jones

Yeah, I right now I'm planning to move back to Dallas, which is so crazy freshman year me is kicking herself for saying that, but I do want to go back to Dallas. My dream would be to work in event coordination with American Airlines Center in Dallas. Because, I mean, the Dallas Stars play there, the Mavericks play there, and they obviously have crazy concerts there. And I mean, we all know I love, I love a good event.

Gavin Kelly

So to plan there good place for it, that's a good arena, too. I was there just a couple weeks ago. It's a good time. All right, let's shift, let's shift over to Landon here. Let's talk about your background. Tell us about where you're from and what led you to Louisiana Tech.

Landyn Jones

So I'm actually from San ant. Antonio, Texas. So talk about a far away from home. Yeah, really, um, I had no plan to come to a Louisiana University. I was very much like, I'm gonna stick to what I know Texas. I'd always wanted to go to Texas A and M, so naturally, I applied the only thing that kind of like there, there was a wrench thrown into the plan. We moved to Covington, Louisiana my senior year of high school, so I wasn't granted out of state, I mean, in state tuition anymore. So I truly just applied to Louisiana Tech on a whim. I came and I toured, or like during orientation, I absolutely fell in love. Yeah, I tell people all the time, like me ending up here was a huge blessing, because, like, again, I had never anticipated coming to Louisiana University. One, yeah. Two, meeting Riley, yeah. Three, falling in love with this place. So, um, that's kind of how I ended up here. My grandfather did graduate from here, so I guess it was kind of always in the back of my mind, yeah. But it would never was like, Yes, this is the place for me. But as soon as I stepped foot on campus, it was like, I feel a sense of home here, right? And I'm so glad this is where I ended up.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, we love to hear it. So Covington, South Louisiana, I know you weren't in Louisiana. You know that long before you had to make a decision about college, but was like those South Louisiana schools that we try not to mention by name, or any of them appealing to you at the time, or like, once you tour tech, that was it. I

Landyn Jones

I never even looked into any South Louisiana schools, to be completely honest. I was like, if I'm going to an SEC, it's a and m, because that's where I wanted to go my entire life. So I didn't even apply to those who should not be right, because that was just never like in the cards for me, I it was just Louisiana Tech, and I was like, yes, what

Gavin Kelly

are you studying? I'm in biology. Okay, was it always biology? And always been biology, and when did you know that that was what you wanted

Landyn Jones

to study? Um, I knew I have a heart for service, and we'll obviously get into that later, but I knew, like going into college, I wanted to do something in the medical field. I've always been, like, you could ask my parents, like, I've always been very science oriented. Like, I always enjoyed doing simple, like, things as simple as melting ice on a melting plate to, like, studying the human body. So it was like, it's always intrigued me. So I knew I wanted to do something science related. My senior year of high school, I did an internship at a dental office, and I was like, Yes, this is the field I want to go into. So it's always kind of been science for me. Yeah. How much school do you have left? I'm going to graduate

Gavin Kelly

also in May. Okay, so same question to you, what are the plans after May?

Landyn Jones

Ideally, I'll be a dental hygienist. Okay, barring I get into school dental hygiene school, I wanted to get my under my degree first, just in biology, which is a little more broad, because I do have, like, an

interest in teaching as well. So like, if I get to a point in my life where I could be like a biology teacher, that'd be super cool. But ideally, I'd be a dental hygienist, hopefully in Texas. Okay,

Gavin Kelly

very good. Back to Texas. We're losing you guys. No, very cool. And also kind of indicative of union board as one of, I would say, one of the bigger and quote, unquote, main student organizations on campus, in terms of, like pulling in students from different majors, kind of for a common thing, but it's a certain type of student I think that is drawn to union board. But I think also, in talking with union board students here on the podcast, in the past, the type of student that comes into tech, the freshman version of a student who ends up on union board, is not always the same as the senior version of that student. You know, I've talked to we mentioned before the podcast talking about Cade and Reagan, and they both talked about, like, yeah, the freshmen version of us didn't see this happening. So let's talk about that with you guys. Riley, you kind of mentioned it a little bit. Talk about applying to be a part of union board. Why that was something you felt like you were drawn to. And were you always that type of student like coming out of high school? Were you the I'm going to get involved student, or was it a different thing when you got to tech?

Riley Jones

Yeah, so in high school, I was super involved. I was a music kid. High School, naturally, there I said it, I would have rehearsals at 6am and then I wouldn't leave school until probably 6pm or later. And I did that for all of my high school career. So when I came to college, our OSL was Kiera Maxey, who, at the time, was vice president of union board. We come from a line a legacy, and she had encouraged us to imply, and she was such a present OSL, and we got to know her, we got to know her friends and a lot of the uni board members before we even applied. So it was kind of naturally, just somewhere that we wanted to be. It was comfortable, and it was something we wanted to be a part of. We met the people. They were loving, they were caring, they were welcoming, and so we applied, and luckily, made it on together.

Gavin Kelly

Did you set your sights on having a leadership position in the organization early on, or was that something that kind of fell on to you as the years went by?

Riley Jones

I knew I wanted to lead in union board. I shadowed for President our freshman year. And I knew I wasn't going to run. I wasn't going to run as a freshman, but I wanted to kind of understand what it was like. And then I had written in for talent show, got it, and then I knew very early on that I wanted to play in Spring Fling, yeah, because

Gavin Kelly

those, you know, those big events, those Spring Fling, Fall Fling, talent show, the homecoming events like tech retreat, and we'll talk about a little bit more specifically about those. But you know, it takes a lot of planning and effort to execute, right? It takes a full team, you guys, but also somebody has to lead that charge. So talk to me about your first event where you had kind of big responsibilities and kind of how that went down.

Riley Jones

My first event was talent show, and it happened at Spring Fling 2024 which was Kate and Reagan's. It was the first time it had ever been done like that. So I luckily got to spend the entire year, like watching Kate and Reagan plan Spring Fling. So when it came around to me having my own event, I had watched them, and they were so well prepared that I knew I wanted to be just as well prepared. And my first like, I was really nervous. I was a sophomore, yeah, I wanted to impress everyone, mainly because I wanted Spring Fling for the next year, yeah. And it was, it was great. My event went great, obviously, with the help of Caden Reagan kind of aiding me with the things that I couldn't get with a \$2,000 budget, yeah. Um, but then when I planned Spring Fling last year, that was, I would say, that's when I really, yeah, fell into a leadership position. Talent show was great, but, I mean, it was under Kate and Reagan. I kind of worked under them. So when I got my own Spring Fling, I wanted to show that I was a leader that not necessarily wanted to boss everyone around and control people, but I wanted people to feel like they could come to me with things, and I wanted them to feel like I trusted them. So when it came to our work days, when it came to painting or decorating or designing things for the event, sometimes I would let that. I would give that away to people on my committee. I'd be like, Okay, well, I trust that you're going to make this look good. I trust that you're going to paint it good, because I'm going to be running around like a chicken with my head cut off a little bit. I trust that you can take some of this weight off my shoulders. And they did. They responded well to that. I mean, I, I didn't. Rather than someone that they had, they felt like they had to follow. I wanted to be someone that they felt like they could stand with. Yeah, if that makes any Yeah,

Gavin Kelly

absolutely. And also like it does take a village, because you guys are, like, booking different like, fair rides and stuff and concerts and artists and having to figure out what to do with, like, you said, a limited budget, and then day of a lot of that is very hands on in terms of you guys setting up and tearing down. So everybody who attends gets to see the fun part, but there's a lot that goes on behind the scenes, for sure. So that makes perfect sense. Let's talk about your journey into union board. Was that something that made sense to you early on as well? And I know Riley mentioned getting an OSL sort of nudge on that, on that front, but was it that's something that made sense to you like, were you, again, the type of student out of high school that was very involved, or was union board something you kind of took a

Landyn Jones

chance on? So, I mean, again, like Kiera really encouraged us to go to the union board table, and knowing that this is where I wanted to go to school. And coming from, you know, a big Texas school, and then senior year, moving to, like, a smaller Louisiana school, I didn't really, I didn't know a lot of people, so I knew coming to campus, like, I really wanted to get involved. I was ready to make friends. So we went to the union board tent. I had no idea what it was, and they briefly described like, what it was. And I was like, Yes. Like, these people are serving the student body. This is exactly up my alley. Like, never mind the event planning side. Like I had no experience in event planning, but I do, like, again, have a big heart for service. So I was like, this is exactly what I want to do. So when applications had come out, I applied by the grace of God got it. You know, at first I wasn't really sure what my collegiate career on union board really looked like. I think I really probably, by the end of freshman year, was like, I do want to be in some sort of leadership position. Not entirely sure what that looks like now,

but I knew I wanted to at least plan an event. But additionally, I had, like, a big heart for being a new member. Member like I enjoyed being a new member so much. And then so we get a fall class into spring class. Every year I was in the fall class, and then when that spring class came in, I had such a big heart for them, because I was like, I get to re experience the love for union board just by observing like these students falling in love with it, just like I did. So I knew I wanted to do something related to new members, so I wrote in for the publicity committee as a committee head, and I got it. And publicity isn't necessarily planning an event. It's essentially like everything you see around campus, you know, all the social media, all the flyers, any of the graphics. That's exactly what publicity did. But the unique thing about that position was that new members fall under our what we call committee, so they kind of help us execute anything publicity related. So that was the first time I was like, wow, this is super special. This is like a leadership position that I get to work with new members in, like exactly what I wanted to do. Not only did I want to serve campus, I wanted to serve the board and capacity as well. And that's exactly what I did. And then the following year. So this was last year I planned tech or treat, actually, yeah. Okay, which shameless plug,

Gavin Kelly

yeah, coming up with saying yeah, if, real quick, if you're listening, if you happen to be listening on the release date of this episode, tech or treat this year is going to be like the next day, right? October th. So if you're listening too far after that, we're sorry you missed it, but October 30, tech or treat, it's going to be

Riley Jones

larger pavilion and hideaway. It's going to be right after the homecoming parade. It will lead straight to the stairs of the tack, where they will have a pep rally, and then we will go straight into our event. Yeah,

Gavin Kelly

Homecoming Week is looking a little different, but also very exciting. This year being sort of Halloween center, very cool. But yeah, go ahead. You were saying sorry. I was, you know, shameless plugs are very important.

Landyn Jones

So yes, I planned tech retreat, so I got to work with some of our regular members as well. It was super awesome last year. We paired with athletics, as we are doing again this year. But we did, they did. We did, like, a tech madness, union board, decorate collab was super awesome. Is huge. And so I knew after that, I was like, Okay, I know I wanted to continue to lead in union board. I know exactly, like, I know exactly what I want to do and I'm ready to do it. I ran for the vice president election knowing I wanted to work with new members, because that's essentially my job, because I'm over new members and member relations. So that's kind of how I got to where I am.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, it's you guys have similar reasons for, you know, taking on union board the way you have, but also different reasons, something that's interesting. Riley, I know we're only a few weeks into the school year, and there's a lot of year left and a lot of union board activities to be done, but talk to me a little bit about your I guess, your philosophy as the president, like how you lead, you mentioned a little bit kind

of being able to delegate and trusting your your staff. But talk to me kind of about your ideas, your philosophy, your plans for union board for this year

Riley Jones

ahead. My biggest thing that I really want to do is I, I want to leave union board in a place where I can feel comfortable when I leave. I mean, I've dedicated my college career to this organization, and it's something that I will, like, always think about. I'm going to be like, 20 years from now, I'd be like, Wow, I'm thinking about union board at thinking about union board today. I just, I want to leave these people and this organization that I love so much in a good spot. And I have no doubt about it. I mean, we have incredible members that will, in coming months, run for the positions that me and Landon are in, and I know they're going to do a great job at these positions. I also I just, I will always say I want, I want to be someone like I want to be a leader on the board. But I also, rather than have my members look at me like I'm meant to lead them, I want them to look at me as Riley as their friend. And I just so happen to have a job where I help committee heads plan their events when I got the position, rather than, Oh, yeah, I have all this power now, it was more of like, I just have an opportunity to to help committee heads feel that, like there's, there's no feeling, like the feeling of being at your event when it's happening, it is, it's electric, like, I I still think about Spring Fling. It was the best day of my life. It was incredible. And I think in my speech, I said I wanted to be able to somehow, like, give that feeling to other people that were planning these events.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, very nice, very nice. Landon. I kind of can figure out where you're going, talking about the reasons you joined up and your responsibilities now, but talk to me about in the vice presidency, kind of what your hope is for that throughout the year,

Landyn Jones

I think, like, ultimately, I mean, I'm over regular members, but I have a big heart for our new members too, and that's especially right now, just because. We got new members. Within last two weeks. It's consumed a lot of my time. I just, I really cling on to what I call newbie magic. So that's what we call our new members newbies. I cling on to that newbie magic. I just can't wait to see these kids fall in love with the board. I can't wait to see how they grow in the board, and I can't wait to see how they lead the board in the future, alongside a lot of our regular members, a lot of these new kids, like they're going to be our committee heads within the next year or two. So that excites me, but it's also it's exciting because we're the groundwork for them. We set the expectation, you know, we set the precedent. So how we lead is how they'll take care of the board. And so, like, I'm really kind of building off of what Riley was saying about leaving the board in a place where she feels comfortable leaving. I think we're doing that, and that, like, really excites me. So I don't really know if that answers your question. No, it

Gavin Kelly

does. It absolutely does. Yeah, because, you know, Riley mentioned, you know, you want to see people to see you, just as Riley as someone that they've known, and you just happen to have responsibilities in the presidency, same for the vice presidency, because, like, these are still students leading students. It's a tricky position. You know, it's not like a job where you have a clear supervisor or whatever. You know, you guys are still all in this together. You guys still all have the same classes and

responsibilities as a student outside of union board. So it's a tricky balance, I'm sure, but it sounds like you guys have good philosophies on that. So we're talking about new members. I don't know how many listeners might be prospective students or students who might be thinking about union board in the future, but this is a good exercise regardless. I'll ask you both, Riley, Riley, I'll ask you first, if you were pitching union board to somebody, which I'm sure you could do in your sleep, as to why it's a good part of the student experience, why somebody should consider joining union board. Consider, pretend you're back at orientation, hearing about union board, and now it's your turn to give that version of your pitch. What would that sound like?

Riley Jones

It may be selfish for me to just say my story, but like that, I feel like that's what I've I that's with my my freshmen, and I got through to a lot of them. Union board was the first place I found community on campus. I love to serve the student body, but I mean deeper than that, you end up finding a group of people who truly want you there, like truly we're an organization that all we we all want to serve, and we all want to bring joy to the campus and bring joy to the students at our events. And I did an interview after spring filling last year, and I had said in there, like, if I brought joy to at least one person at my event, like, then I have accomplished it. Like, I'm great. It's a welcoming community of 70 plus people who will absolutely be there for you. You have a group of people you can lean on. We hold each other accountable, and we're just, we're there for each other. And as well as every week, we have a meeting where we just talk nonsense and have fun and just hang out. And it's, it's a really wonderful place to be. Yeah,

Gavin Kelly

and something tells me that you've you made more than one person's day better with your bank, because the line is out the block at some of these things with, you know, I'm sure you guys attendance wise, I mean, like, I've seen pretty trending upwards numbers at these things, which is good. It means you're getting the attention. You did your job, as you know, getting the word out there when you were in that position. So, yeah, it's always good to see, because we kind of, I think we're in a time when it's almost like, socially, a student going to an event or something. It's like, that's not nonchalant enough. Does that make sense? Like, sometimes someone's like, oh, it's not cool to

Landyn Jones

go do stuff, right? And having, like, it's, it's crazy now, because, and, I mean, I, we were just talking me and Riley were talking about how we're literally screen safe, screen agers, like, you know, with all these networks being down today, yeah, we're, like, we live in an age with, like, people are so attached to their phones and cling, clung to their phones. It's like, how do we draw more people away from that? Yeah, because, I mean, like, there was a time where union board was hosting events and they didn't have a social media blockage or something in that room, like that was just what was to do, you know? So I'm proud of us, because I feel like we've done a really good job at conquering that. Yeah,

Gavin Kelly

it's tough. It's a tough problem for on campus events, for students, for athletic events, whatever. It's like people like you said, people are so in their phone that's like, why would I go there, when I could just go somewhere else here? Yeah, yeah, we're cooked a little bit. But it's Landon, same question for you that

I asked Riley. And you can do any version of this pitch that you want, but if you were speaking to somebody who was considering union board, how would you sort of sell that? Idea to them,

Landyn Jones

um, I would first tell them what we do externally, because obviously, you know, we're serving campus and we're planning events, and I would describe, kind of like, what that looks like a little bit, but I would also talk about the internal benefits you get from it as well. Because, you know, you are meeting a great new group of people, but you're also growing yourself. You learn so many social skills. I mean, I've learned better time management. I've made so many great connections within this organization. So not only are you helping grow campus, but you're help growing yourself. Yeah, so you do get a lot of different aspects of benefits within the realm of union board, I think it's super awesome to see, kind of like we only saw one event outside of the board before, you know, we got on. It was Fall Fling our freshman year, and that was such a crazy event. We and Riley actually went together, and there were so many rides, and we were just like, wow, this is like the coolest place ever. So like experiencing that as a person who wasn't on the board at the time, like, I can only imagine how some of these other people feel, like, sometimes I wish I could have experienced a Spring Fling not being on the board, just like that euphoric feeling of being a university student going to a university event, you know, but that was off track. It's just, it's just, it's super from an outside perspective. It's just super cool to see what we do, and then becoming the person to do it is just such an ethereal feeling. Yeah, and then again, like just growing yourself from within the board, meeting a whole new community of people, meeting your best friends. Like, it's just, it's just rewarding, like all around it's

Gavin Kelly

rewarding. And you talk about attending an event just as a student, not as a union board member, but also once you've done it with that sort of internal, behind the scenes type role, it's hard to go back. Once you've been to a football game or something where you have a press box pass or a sideline pass or whatever, you get to watch a game in the sweets and you're like, now I have to just like, go watch a game like a regular person. Yeah, but thankfully, I guess with something like union board, or, like, you've been in OSL, you guys, you know, build these communities and have these connections that are going to last well past your days at Louisiana Tech, which means if and when you ever come back, you probably won't have any problem getting behind the scenes at any of these events again. But I appreciate you guys kind of sharing your union board story real quick before we wrap up, we mentioned that we were going to kind of talk a little bit about upcoming events. We mentioned tech or treat, which, again, if you're listening, is urgent, because if you're listening on the day this comes out, it's the next day. So go to tech or treat, if you're considering that. And then there's always tech the halls, yes, right? And that's going to be, I think we said December, December 11, okay? And that's a fun annual thing. That's any surprises for that that you could share?

Riley Jones

Well, right now, tech rich, I'm not tech or treat. Tech the halls, is one of those events where every year it's a little bit different every year. I mean, every year that we've been on the board, it's been incredibly different every single year. And the girls that are planning it, Asia tell us, and Madison Maxie are very excited. They have a whole lot of ideas they want. They want it to feel like you are walking into the North Pole. Santa Claus is right there, and you're about to get the best present ever. But I won't share

too much, no, yeah, don't I don't want them to get mad at me if they listen to this, but it's going to be great. I'm very excited,

Gavin Kelly

very good, and they will do great. So yeah, looking forward to that throughout the holidays. And then, of course, it's a ways away, but then we'll have a Spring Fling, you know, next year, and that's always a good way to because that's usually late in the quarter, right? So it feels like a good wrap up at a time when a lot of students need it, but you guys will be wrapping up school and wrapping up your presidency and vice presidency, so that's going to be, I'm sure, a very chaotic but rewarding time for both of you. Scary, scary. Yeah, don't you know things have a you guys have probably realized this already. Things work out the way they're supposed to. So I think if you kind of just trust take it a day at a time, all that good stuff anyway, again, thanks for making time. We're a few weeks in the school year I mentioned. So it's kind of like midterm time right now, a little bit so busy, and then that union board, everything else you guys are involved in. So thanks for making time to be on the podcast again, if you're listening one last time and it's not Thursday, the 30th has passed yet. Go to tech or treat at Argent pavilion. That'll be a fun time. But yeah, thank you guys both. Go union board. Go Dogs. Thanks.

Gavin Kelly

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