

141. Hannah Brotherton: Coding and Crowns

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 guest for this episode is our current Miss Louisiana Tech University, Hannah Brotherton. She is in full crown and sash in front of me as we speak, but we're here in January time of recording, and just a week or two away from crowning a new Miss tech. And so we like to bring our Miss techs on at the end of their reign to kind of let them talk about the full year they've had with the Miss tech crown. So Hannah, thank you for joining us here on the podcast.

Hannah Brotherton

Yeah, of course. Thank you so much for inviting me.

Gavin Kelly

So we were talking a little bit before we hit record about its winter quarter, and winter quarter is a its own beast. You know, you talk to any student who's ever been at Louisiana Tech, but let's, let's kind of get to know you as a student first. So talk to me about what you're studying and kind of where your passions for that pursuit came from.

Hannah Brotherton

Okay, I'm currently in my master's program. Yay. Super senior. Great time. Fifth year over here, but yeah, master's program in Business Administration. I'm not specializing in anything, but I could be swayed, because I really don't want to leave Louisiana Tech. But yeah, I think that's why I chose to stay for my master's program anyways, because I really don't want to leave. I already completed my undergraduate degree in Computer Information Systems, and I got a management minor

Gavin Kelly

was, first of all, the concurrent program in the College of Business really makes getting your master's really easy over there your MBA. So it's always interesting to talk to other business majors, because I was a marketing major, and it was like process of elimination. For me, it was like I ended up in marketing because I knew I didn't want to do econ or finance or accounting, like the number z business majors, and then that really leaves like management and stuff like that. So it was process of elimination. But I'm always interested to talk to students about business wise Why was x major the choice for you? So what was it about CIS for you?

Hannah Brotherton

This is such a weird and very niche story. I think this might be an original sentence, please. Please go for it anyways. My high school had this thing called golden tickets. And trust me, you wanted a golden ticket because that's how you got exempt from your finals. And you best believe I was not taking any finals whatsoever. Unfortunately, I was one golden ticket short, and no way was I taking a chemistry

exam. So I decided to take a coding class just to qualify for another one. And the teacher said, this is a fairly easy assignment. It should take about three hours to complete. However, I completed it in 20 minutes. So apparently, yeah, knack for coding was in my blood. Who knew absolutely had no idea about that. And she checked it. She was like, Are you sure? Do you need help? Are you good? And I was like, I guess I'm done. It said that I'm done. That sounds so dumb, but she reviewed it. She's like, Hey, have you ever considered coding? And I was like, no, but maybe I should, and that's kind of what led me to touring tech. I heard about your CIS program, and I just fell in love with the place here. Yeah, where are you from? El Dorado, Arkansas, really close, about an hour

Gavin Kelly

north, about an hour north. Familiar with El Dorado. So I guess proximity wise, tech is pretty close, and I guess out of state scholarships are appealing. Was or any other Arkansas colleges on your radar? Or once you figure it, once you step foot on Tech, I think that was it, huh?

Hannah Brotherton

Probably pretty much. However, I did get a d1 golf scholarship offer to a certain school that says, Woo Pig suey. We won't name names around here, because that's enemy territory, but I toured there. Love the golf program, but that was kind of the extent of what I liked. But Tech was just so different, the culture, the crowd, the people, yeah, especially the people. It just drew me here, yeah.

Gavin Kelly

And a place like El Dorado too, that kind of like, you know, people joke all the time that North Louisiana is just south Arkansas.

Hannah Brotherton

It is, I'm also one of those for you.

Gavin Kelly

It's home, right? So that makes sense, too. So we're glad you ended up here, not in Fayetteville. But is that something so if you had a golf scholarship, I mean, you must have been pretty handy with a golf club. Is that something you've been able to do even kind of just as a hobby keep up with that, or is that kind of falling by the wayside with other stuff?

Hannah Brotherton

Absolutely, I still go and play. I'm really fortunate. My boyfriend also likes it, and we'll go every soon, now and then, just kind of whenever both of us are free and able to

Gavin Kelly

it's good golf's one of those where, you know, we were talking about the weather and how it's cold right now, and that's, you know, like, it's not peak golf weather, but sometimes you just got to get out there and get to

Hannah Brotherton

swinging and see what. Sometimes, sometimes, but a cold club terrible. Oh, there's nothing

Gavin Kelly

so bad. Talking to somebody the other day about the the worst part about winter golf is when you jam a shot. That it just goes through your

Hannah Brotherton

whole I know you feel the tingle go through you. It's awful. Yeah, I wouldn't recommend doing that if you ever get into golf. Perhaps don't do that one.

Gavin Kelly

That's good advice. Well, interesting. So yeah, not too far of a trip for you to come here to tech from El Dorado. But I guess if you were at that point in school where you kind of learned about yourself that you had a knack for coding and that that might be something you were interested in before that. What had you had any considerations about what you wanted to do, what you want to, quote, unquote, be when you grow up or study in college? Like, what up to that point, had you been thinking about, or was that kind of just the switch flip

Hannah Brotherton

moment for you, that kind of was the switch flip moment. For me, I always thought about what I would be. However, nothing really seemed to keep my interest, like I was one of those overachiever kind of students. So of course, I would go and research everything and see all the ins and outs of it, and so in my mind, I would close a door before I ever even walk through it. And that sounds bad, but I don't know I like to be really prepared, and I don't want to go into a situation that I know I'm not going to like. So why would I? That's why I researched everything. I just got really lucky with coding. Who knew?

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, well, when you realize that about yourself and you, you know, came to tech and you toured and had the whole feels like home experience that everybody has, what were you in those early stages planning to do with your degree? Like, what did you hope for yourself career wise? And has that changed over the last five years. For you,

Hannah Brotherton

yeah, I've always thought about being a computer network architect. Okay, that sounds extreme, but it sounds specific. Is what it sounds. Yes, like I said, I'm very oriented. I know what I want. I'm just one of those kinds of people. But yeah, that's just what I always thought of. As soon as I realized coding was in fact, for me, I started researching career paths down that, and that just checked every single box on my list, because it's going to be something different every day, but I get to touch into a lot of different aspects of coding within it, and that's just what kept my interest. Talk a

Gavin Kelly

little bit about that, about that career. What is it? Kind of the ideal job look like for you?

Hannah Brotherton

Maybe working for a digital marketing firm one day and building websites. That sounds like quite the dream, but I think I could do it. I think that seems like something that I can do with me being detail oriented. And besides, a building website is absolutely nothing that's that's a walk in the park.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, don't tell certain people that. But we just read, we just overhauled the University website in 2025 it took several months, and then we launched it in Fall Quarter. That's a beast. Rebuilding the entire U

Hannah Brotherton

website or something is very different than starting from scratch. And you

Gavin Kelly

talk about working for a digital marketing firm or something like that, and that too backs up your business education, right? Because the College of Business is very good about you might be this major, but you're going to have to be exposed to all the other majors in business.

Hannah Brotherton

So that was actually something about the program here, specifically at Louisiana Tech, that I like so much, that we would have to be exposed to so many classes before you really start specializing within our major. Yeah, and just having all that extra knowledge and extra experience in basically every field within business has really helped me grow well,

Gavin Kelly

shout out some of your professors. Let's talk about some professors over the last five years that have really been influential to you.

Hannah Brotherton

Yeah, definitely. Mr. Sutherland, shout out, Mr.

Gavin Kelly

Sutherland. He's a Barrick best you know. Mr. Sutherland, I had him. I had him when I was

Hannah Brotherton

when I was in school. Wow, he's been here that long. I didn't realize that he seems so normal. He seems like young, like young core, I guess. If that makes sense, who else do I really like? Oh, my advisor, my undergrad advisor, Dr Lee. He's the best ever. In fact, I spoke with him the other day whenever I went up to the CIS suite, him and Dr Ellis. Now, I've ever, never actually had Dr Ellis as a professor, but I know him as a person, and that's basically the same thing in my mind, and I really like him a lot, too. Yeah, those are some of my favorites. Oh, Dr Roberts in the supply chain field. Yeah, he's a good one. He's a really good one. He actually wrote one of my recommendation letters into getting into the concurrent program along with my advisor. So shout out him. He's the reason why I'm still here. Because he could have said, Hey, this student is actually really bad. Don't let her in. Luckily, he did not

Gavin Kelly

say that anybody had a reason to say that.

Hannah Brotherton

Yeah, me being the overachiever, but still

Gavin Kelly

very nice. Well, I guess you know, all this is starting to kind of paint a picture of you as a person, and kind of how you carry yourself, not just through school, but maybe through your personal life too. But it sort of adds up as to why you're sitting in front of me with a crown and sash right now. So let's, let's talk about the Miss tech pageant and the Miss tech crown. But let's, let's back up a little bit before that, kind of talk about your history with pageants in general, and kind of how far back that goes and why that's been a part of your life for the time that it has.

Hannah Brotherton

Yeah, I started doing pageants when I was about three. Okay, that sounds like the longest time ever, because I'm 23 now, my birthday wasn't that long ago, but, yeah, my mom put them in put me in them at a young age, because I think she started to notice that I was just kind of a shyer individual. Now, I don't know if that was actually shyness or, Hey, I'm a three year old. I'm gonna be attached to your hip. Yeah, yeah. But she wasn't risking that. Thank goodness it's so. Put me in a pageant, and I loved it. I made so many friends, friends that I still talk to today, which is insane, because I was three, who knew I would be such a good friend maker as a three year old, but just her putting me in that that's really helped me a lot. And I stayed in that system until let me think freshman year of college, and then I took a bit of a break. I just wanted to focus on my studies for a little bit. And then Gracie Reisman, she was, she was a past Miss Louisiana Tech. Of past Miss Louisiana, yeah, the true pageant queen herself. She said, Hannah, I think you should try to compete for Miss Louisiana Tech. And I did in January of 2024, and I got first runner up and Miss Congeniality. Very, very lucky about that. And that kind of lit the fire under me to try again next year, which is when I won my title.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah. So I guess if you go at it the first time, and you have success with it, whether you know you might not won the crown, but then a year later you do, that's got to be a confidence builder, I'm guessing, talk to me about kind of your your preparation for the Miss tech pageant, specifically, especially last year when you won, going into it, that mindset of so close the year before. Maybe I just need to change this, this and this, but I don't need to change who I am, because I, you know, I've already been really close. So talk to me about kind of that preparation, and then the week of and then the night of the pageant, kind of what that was like for you.

Hannah Brotherton

As far as the preparation I did a lot of the on stage stuff the exact same. You don't mess with it if I got so many great things the first time. However, what I did change was my community service initiative. Now, the first time that I competed for Miss tech, it was really last minute. I didn't know a year in advance that I was doing it, so I kind of threw a CSI together, really last minute. And it it was something that I do appreciate and admire for someone else. However, it wasn't something that I was truly

passionate about, which, if you're wondering, it was called stunning smiles. It was a dental wellness campaign, just ensuring confidence, because your smile carries a lot. If you're not confident in your smile, you seem shy or quiet or something. And if someone's over here smiling all the time, you immediately think they're outgoing, that they're confident, you know? But with that being said, that just was not quite my cup of tea. Anyways, now I do my sweet memories bakery for the Alzheimer's Association, and I have raised over \$30,000 for them since starting this, which is insane, considering it started in July of 24 Yeah, wow.

Gavin Kelly

So, yeah, I guess going into it with a new community service initiative like that that actually kind of connected to you personally a little bit more, in a way, does make a difference. You said you didn't change any of the other on stage stuff. What's your talent on stage?

Hannah Brotherton

I'm a tap dancer. I love it. I'm gonna be tap dancing my performance that I did at Miss Louisiana this past year too. So feel free to show up to that. You'll see me my bright orange costume. It's gonna be awesome. I'm so excited.

Gavin Kelly

How long in your life have you been tap dancing?

Hannah Brotherton

Probably since I was also three, probably, so yeah, long, long time. Has it

Gavin Kelly

always been your go to talent on stage? Or have you tried other stuff here and there? Or has tap dancing really just been

Hannah Brotherton

I've been other styles of dance too, like Jazz, Jazz, tap clogging. That's typically my main three. However, there's just something about TAP because I can be sassy and yet I can still be articulate. It seems to work for me. It's a crowd favorite. It's my personal favorite. So that's what I do.

Gavin Kelly

Talk a little bit more about. You mentioned, you know, being three and meeting girls through pageantry that you still talk to today. Talk a little bit about the camaraderie at an event like the Miss tech pageant, where, you know, you're competing against all these other girls, but you know, everybody is rooting for each other in a way, and then carrying that onto the Miss Louisiana level, where, again, the stakes are a little higher, and everyone is competing, but there is a sense of camaraderie and togetherness, where everybody kind of wants each other

Hannah Brotherton

to succeed. Yeah, in the first pageant system that I did, it's called our little miss. In fact, they're having a national competition this week. They were the beginning foundation of me learning what sisterhood is,

and since then, I stuck with it. I love those people, and that's why I kept going back year after year after year and after year. But whenever I got to Tech, I just want to focus on studies for a little bit. I know that already said that, but I really did mean it, until Gracie Reisman and she just, she got me right there, took me in the heart and said, Hannah, you're doing this. I'm like, okay, yeah, you're right. I should. And I felt that exact same sisterhood in the Miss Louisiana organization. Something about that just it reminded me of how it used to be when I was younger. And it's not just the nostalgia of it all that gets me excited about pageantry, but it's the fact that I'm still maintaining and creating these friendships with all of these incredible people, people that I know are going to be my bridesmaids one day. It's just so special. It's like a sorority, but for pageant people, yeah, I'm here.

Gavin Kelly

I'm hearing a lot of similarities between how I've heard people talk about sororities in the past. Yeah, let's talk about again, kind of the meaning of what you've been doing. Let's talk about your last year so you win the. The Miss tech crown, and you're representing the University for a full year with it. So talk about what that means to you and kind of how you've done that. Like, what have you done over the past year to represent tech?

Hannah Brotherton

Man, what have I done? What haven't I done? I feel like I do at least three things a week for the university or for the Miss Louisiana organization, pretty much any excuse. I can put this car on a banner on, I'm going to do it. It could be showing up to a recruiting event. It could be showing up to something like a podcast, literally anything. If I get to put this car on a banner on and show my face, walk around campus, take pictures with people. That's putting the Miss Louisiana organization and the Miss Louisiana Tech brand out there. Yeah, and I think that's really important, because pageants are kind of dying unfortunately, and I don't want them to, because I want more people to get involved, just because I've seen how much pageants have shaped me, and I know that they can do wonders for 1000s of other people, if they would just give them a chance. But yeah, as far as what all I've done this year, man, so so much hit the

Gavin Kelly

highs for us. Talk about maybe two or three things that have really stood out to you, raising \$17,000

Hannah Brotherton

just this year alone, just this year alone, for the Alzheimer's Association, and you already mentioned it is a personal cause to me. I have two grandparents that have passed from it. I have one that still has it. It's hard, it's hard, and as heartbreaking as it is, their love and my love for them inspires this fight, but I have to do something about it. And why not bake some cookies, put a smile on people's faces, and believe me, I go around and advertise so, so much so before school started, back this past August, not August, September. I walked around and I somehow managed to get a list of all the FYE professors. I don't know how I managed to swing that one,

Gavin Kelly

but when you're Miss tech, you have some advantages, I guess. I

Hannah Brotherton

guess that's fair, because I just asked. They're like, Here you go. Yes, thank you. And I personally handed them flyers, and I was like, Hey, do you want to buy a cookie box for your freshman class to show them how much you love them? And I was pulling out their heart strings too. I was sitting, I was just chatting with people, and this was right before school was about to start back, and they thought I was just the sweetest little thing, pulling out their heart strings, just having face to face conversations with people instead of sending a mass email. It seems to work wonders. And I think that was probably my proudest accomplishment. Just being able to raise all those funds, and that was just for the 2025 year. That's not a grand

Gavin Kelly

total, right? How has being a representative of Louisiana Tech changed your relationship with the university? Like, what have you learned about tech? What have you learned about yourself as a Tech student over the last year? That's kind of changed for you.

Hannah Brotherton

I learned that I can, in fact, do it all. I used to think I don't have enough time for this. I don't have enough time to study, I don't have enough time to hang out with friends, I don't have enough time to go home, even though it's only an hour. But yeah, I realized that I really can do it all. I need to focus on time management, which, luckily, I'm really good at. Now, shout out to Microsoft Excel for that one

Gavin Kelly

we were talking about, kind of the the tail end of of your reign here, and what's, what's going to be the date for the this upcoming Miss Louisiana, 27th Yes, 27th it's creeping up on us. So at the time of recording, we're just a couple weeks out, right? So I asked you, before we started recording, if you're, like, counting on the days or trying not to think about it. And I know it's a little bit of both. And I know this type of thing is always bittersweet. You know, we've had the last three or four missed text on the podcast, and they'll have a similar mindset when it comes to these last couple weeks of you know, it's been so fulfilling and so enriching over the last year, but you know, it's all there's part of it's going to be sad, right? So talk to me about in a couple weeks from now, when it comes time to pass the crown on, how you anticipate that moment being for you, and then also kind of words of wisdom for the next one up, the next Miss tech, you know, what would you want her to know about what it's been like for you,

Hannah Brotherton

what it's been like for me, the most memorable year ever. And I mean that in a literal sense, I think I have 1000 photos, 1000 new best friends, and all I can say is thank you to Louisiana Tech for that, because without this crown on my head, I wouldn't have made the exact same memories. Because I don't think I would have kept doing it.

Gavin Kelly

I think too. You talk about philanthropy, and you talk about community involvement, and you talk about, you know, the Crown meaning something when you step out in public, because you're representing, in this case, Louisiana, Tech University. But no matter what title you are, you're representing something, some organization, someone, someplace, and that means different things to different people. But I also

think at the same time, some people have in their head, like stereotypical thoughts about a pageant girl and about what it means to be Miss, whatever, break down those stereotypes a little bit in terms of, like, why it is beyond just a girl with a crown and a banner that. Says, Miss whatever on it, like what? It's deeper than that, right? So talk to me about why

Hannah Brotherton

so many people think that the general stereotype of a pageant girl is just some tall, dumb blonde, and could not be further from the truth, I am blonde. That is true, however tall, no, dumb, absolutely not. And it's really hard to know that some people truly do think down upon pageant people so much because they think that we're sexualizing ourselves on the stage just because we have a fitness category or a swimsuit category. And that's not true at all. This is instilling confidence in us. We're owning our own skin that way, which not everybody needs to have extra confidence, but the feeling of being confident no matter what situation you're walking into, it's something really important to everybody. I think everyone can have life lessons like that, not just females, but guys too. So if you ever get the opportunity to judge a pageant, you should probably try it, just saying, it would be kind of cool.

Gavin Kelly

And they also, you know, you guys have to ask, I mean, answer some pretty tough questions like they intentionally make those questions difficult to try to see how you handle different political or social questions and debates and things like that. So, you know, you don't just get to get up there and sing and dance and strut around. There's more to it, right, right?

Hannah Brotherton

Because you're becoming the face of an organization. You're becoming the face of someone's brand. They don't just want anybody up there, because everything you say and everything you do matters and it reflects upon them.

Gavin Kelly

And in this case, that's Louisiana Tech, Louisiana Tech University. Well, I can say that we appreciate you handling it well over the last year. Well, thanks. And you know we talked about the last year for you pageant wise and your life as a student and your MBA. Right now. Are you gonna be graduating in the spring with that?

Hannah Brotherton

No, unfortunately, not the summer. Though. That's actually better, because I don't want to leave. That's fine.

Gavin Kelly

Which leads to my next question, after that MBA and after your academic chapter closes here at Louisiana Tech, do you have plans after what do you see for yourself in the future? I mean, I know we talked about your job and your ideal job, but is your plan to stick around here in Russell and see what happens? Go back home, go somewhere completely different. What are you thinking?

Hannah Brotherton

There's really not any digital marketing firms around here, which I know that I can always use somewhere else as a stepping stone to eventually reach that goal. However, I want to grow and learn with the company and stay there, which that's just, that's just how I am as a loyal person. Sure, part of the tenants of tech, you know, it's instilled in me at this point, but I think that's going to be somewhere in Texas. There's just so many opportunities out there. Besides, it's only a few hours from here, I can always come back, and I'll eventually force my future kids to come here too.

Gavin Kelly

So, well, you're doing the thing that we we try to keep from happening here in Louisiana, which is, people who come to Louisiana go to school, they graduate, and where they go, they go to Texas. But maybe you don't count because you're from Arkansas, so we'll just say

Hannah Brotherton

that I'm already out of state. Yeah, exactly. I'm already beating the odds. How often do you

Gavin Kelly

get a chance to go I mean, it's not far away, but often you get a chance to go home? Is your is your family? Something that you I'm guessing, is someone that you take very

Hannah Brotherton

seriously, and very much I'm very family oriented. I will at least go twice a month. Sometimes they'll come down here and visit me, which is nice too, because there are better restaurants here than in El Dorado. But yeah, we always see each other. We always make time for each other. That's just part of the time management and really loving your family. I'm very fortunate to have, quite literally, the most ideal dream family you can possibly imagine.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, I got one more question for you before we let you go. So we've talked about kind of these different sides of you, the Miss tech side, the pageant girl side, whatever we'd like to call it, and then Hannah the student, Hannah the future employee. But talk to me about what it's like knowing that all of that is the same person. Like, how do you, how do you manage having, like, a social media presence or presence with your friends and your family, where these things all mix, where you You are Miss Louisiana Tech, but you are also Hannah Brotherton, the student. And you know, how do you not lose yourself in these different segments of your life? How do you keep yourself as yourself? How do you stay who you are?

Hannah Brotherton

That's really easy. That's because I don't switch between you. Get all of me, no matter what crown I'm wearing or not wearing, all my head, I'm still the exact same person. Now, people may not think that just because I'm full glam, fake eyelashes on I'm in my high heels and everything, but I'm still a student. I'm still going to college, just like the rest of us over here. I still have a family that I care about. I still have best friends that I go see every single week. I'm still me, it's just with the crown on my head too, and a pound of hairspray probably,

Gavin Kelly

I wouldn't know clearly, but I thank you again for making time for us. Like I said, a busy winter quarter and you're pursuing a graduate degree, which is its own thing. Good luck finishing out your degree. Good luck at the upcoming pageant. Try not to get too misty eyed when it comes. Was time to put the crown on somebody else's head, but thanks again and go dogs.

Hannah Brotherton

Go Dogs, thanks for having me.

Gavin Kelly

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