

144. Tess Gardner: Precision Under Pressure

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 if you're listening to this episode, maybe there's a chance that you have a copy of our latest 1894 magazine in your hands, and if you have had a chance to read that yet our feature story, our cover story, features one Tess Gardner, and she is our guest for this episode of beyond 1894 today. So this podcast kind of goes in conjunction with that magazine. This episode does a little bit we're going to talk to Tess. This interview is actually serving as her interview for the magazine article. So Tess, we I mentioned to you before we started recording, but one of the goals of the magazine, every time we put out an edition of the magazine, is to align some of the stories with the strategic framework of the university. And the theme of your story is maximizing human potential. That's the strategic framework theme that we're talking about. Most recently in the magazine, we talked about our freshman class for this year, the fall 2025 freshman class, one of the largest in our history, the largest domestic class we've ever had, the most students from Louisiana we've ever had. So again, you talk about maximizing human potential, a lot of potential there in that class. The addition before that, we spoke with Jesse Webb, a student here at Louisiana Tech, very involved part of the band in physics, a physics major and a music major, a double major, again, maximizing human potential. How do you balance those two things? How do you where do you get your passions from, and what? How is tech helping you fuel those passions? And you are the candidate that we selected for for that theme for this edition of the magazine because you're a junior, right? A junior. I'm a junior computer science major, and you also are twirling, right? I'm the feature twirler band. Very good. So we're gonna get into the details of all that. I'm gonna let you tell us your story. And I think, as with most of our guests, it works best if you take us back to the beginning. So talk to us about where you're from and finding your interests early on, because computer science, I feel like it's one of those majors that's, you know, going into it, it's gonna be tough, so you gotta have a passion for it. You gotta have a passion for it. So talk to us about finding those passions early on, and just give us a little bit of your backstory.

Tess Gardner

So I'm from Birmingham, Alabama. It's about five and a half hours from Reston, Northern Alabama, and I went to Oak Mountain High School, and my passion for computer science actually started in eighth grade, and I was pretty young, probably earlier than when most people decide I didn't know. I just took a computer class in eighth grade, and we learned some very basic block coding. Not it's not really similar to what computer science really is, but I realized I really enjoyed it, and everyone around me hated it. Everyone dreaded going to that class, and it was my favorite class. I loved it. I really connected with that teacher. She was fantastic. And I realized, hmm, maybe, if I enjoy this, and no one else does, maybe this could be something for me. And then I took AP Computer Science Principles in high school. Loved that as well. Everyone hated it. Everyone hated that class. People just took it because it was, like, easy AP class, you know, whatever. I loved it. It was great, really. Just helped me get exposed to some of those early fundamentals of computer science, just some basics, man, I was like, what might

as well give it a shot. Ever since I've gotten to rest in, you know, and I've been in computer science, I've loved it.

Gavin Kelly

What about what do you think it is about it that kind of clicks with you? What? What parts of it do you enjoy? I love

Tess Gardner

problem solving, you know, like coding is really just a big puzzle to me. I've always, I've always been very stem oriented. I've always loved solving problems and puzzles, and I love being presented with a problem, and there's multiple different ways to get to the answer. You know, it can be, it's subjective, but there's still one right answer in the end. There's different ways to get to it absolutely. And I love that about it. I also do love, you know, it's not, it's concrete at the end. You know, there's one answer, and you can apply your skills you've learned. And yeah,

Gavin Kelly

yeah, very nice. Let me ask you too. So you said you're from Birmingham. Yes, a lot of times we talk to people who come to Louisiana Tech, they're from the state, or they're from just an hour or two away. You've made the trip across state lines to get here. So why was Louisiana Tech the right choice for you?

Tess Gardner

I, for me, between my twirling Career and Tech has a great computer science program. It's really was the best of both worlds. So I toured. It was the end of my junior year. I want to say I toured campus. And you know, me and my mom were. You know, you don't hear a whole lot about Louisiana Tech from, where we're from, and so we found out about the tour Link program, and we decided to take a tour. And immediately, as soon as I toured, I loved it. It just feels like home. A lot of people that go here can agree with that, yeah, it's like, as soon as you step on campus, I really knew from there, I was like, I have a very strong feeling. Even at the end of my junior year of high school, I had a very strong feeling that this is where I would end up, just knowing it has the best of the twirling program, which we can get more into. Why I chose that later, but it has everything I wanted, in the Twilio program and a fantastic computer science program. And I never really wanted to go to a huge school, either. And so I love that I'm more than just a number here. You know, I feel seen and heard by everyone on campus. So it really has the best of everything I have been looking for since I was in high school.

Gavin Kelly

So was it more so the twirling aspect or the computer science aspect that drew you to that initial tour? Twirling?

Tess Gardner

Yeah, probably initially. And then, you know, computer science is a great bonus as well.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, they do a good job of personalizing tours,

Tess Gardner

and I did love that they took us to the engineering building, and she walked us through what the curriculum is like. And that really drew me at for sure.

Gavin Kelly

So let's Lea let's back up and talk about twirling, because you've been doing that since you got to tech. I imagine you've been doing it long before. Talk about kind of that twirling background and where that came from. So I actually started in eighth grade, which is pretty late. It sounds like everything for you started in eighth grade. It really did.

Tess Gardner

Honestly, eighth grade was a big year for me. A lot of girls start when they're very young. Most girls start when they're, like, four years old. So I definitely had a lot of catching up to do. I went to a high school football game in middle school, and I saw the twirlers out there on the football field performing the halftime show. And I was like, I have to do that. Like, that's amazing. It's, I will never forget that moment during halftime watching those twirlers. It was huge.

Gavin Kelly

And, you know, like gymnastics background or anything that you just saw that. And was like, I want to be a part of that.

Tess Gardner

I yeah, I had done a little bit dance when I was young, but really not past kindergarten. And so my mom helped me get in touch with the team captain of the major outline at the time, and she started giving private lessons. And then, so that would have been seventh grade. So then eighth grade is when I joined the JV team, and that's when I really started, you know, you know, being routines, being on a team with other girls, and it was definitely hard at first, because you really want to compare yourself to everyone around you that has been twirling since they were a child, right? And I'm like, I just started this. And my one goal for when I started eighth grade was I want to make the high school team, which normally ranges from about six to 10 girls, and because that's a major outline, and that's all I wanted, like, I just want to make the team. I worked my butt off for a good year, worked my butt off, and I was able to make the team against all odds, honestly. So that was great. So I spent four years on the major at line in high school, which is great. I grew a lot. Covid helped a lot too, because I was just those three months, we were sitting at home and twirling every day, yeah, outside every day, twirling. That was great. I eventually even I was on leadership my starting my junior year. So I was a co captain in high school for two years. So learned a lot from that, just being around that many girls all the time, but it's great. And from there, I you know, Junior year is kind of when you start looking at options, and there is a difference between being on a major outline and being a feature twirler. Yeah. So in high school, I was on a major outline. That's where all the girls do the same choreography. You know, your team, you wear matching costumes. Everything looks the same. You do the exact same choreography on the field, but I always wanted in college to be a feature twirler. And what a feature twirler is, is you get to your own routines. You get to pick your own costumes. So there's two of us here at Tech, there's me, and then there's grace, okay? And we both have our own costumes. We do our own routines. We're

kind of on separate sides of the field. So the point, you know, is to kind of like highlight our individual skills, and I always wanted to be a feature twirler over majorette, because I love individual individuality, and being able to utilize my creativity, like I said, I do like the artistic side of things as well. And being able to kind of put my creativity into a routine, and being able to put it on the field is great. So that was something that also drew me to tech, specifically, is because of the feature twerler program.

Gavin Kelly

So I mean, I guess it's kind of impressive to think that somebody with no twirling experience decided to take it up in seventh, eighth grade, yes, and ended up as a feature twirler at a d1 institution, yes. So did you know coming in? I mean, I'm sure you did. I'm sure you realized that you were about to be a feature twirler in a, you know, intense program in a way, and also having an intense every major here has its challenges, but computer science is one of those, I think, is especially challenging. So did you have any sort of worry early? On about, you know, how you were going to balance kind of those two aspects of your college career, or was that something you kind of leaned into?

Tess Gardner

I will say I probably was a little bit in my head about it, okay, but I did go to a great high school, like I said. And I in high school, I took all AP classes, you know, great teachers. I absolutely loved everyone, all the teachers. I felt very prepared going into college because those AP classes, I was already kind of used to balancing twirling like even high school, it's very demanding. You practice three times a week, plus a football game every Friday night. And then, you know, I'm taking AP calculus and AP Biology on top of it, you know. So I was a little bit in my head, but I also was, you know, trying to remember I worked for this I've already, you know, had practice balancing, you know, school and twirling and everything. So it was, you know, it's definitely curveball at first, because this college is different, but I have learned to lean into it, and I do like staying busy. So it works for me.

Gavin Kelly

Did you have you taken on any extra, any extra extracurriculars, I guess I should say, since you've gotten to Louisiana Tech, I mean, I'm twirling, plus computer science studies is a full plate on its own. But have you, have you done anything else since

Tess Gardner

you've been here? Yes, I am a part of the Alpha Chi mega sorority here on campus. And then I also, we have the cyber security innovated research lab on campus. So that's kind of where I figured out I would like to specifically concentrate in cyber security within my major of computer science. And that's a lab that happens every Wednesday, and everyone will come and they'll kind of talk about their research topics, and it's specifically with with cyber security. And so a lot of professors say, if you're interested in cyber interested in cybersecurity, or you want to get involved, to show up to the meetings, you know, you can listen to other people's research and kind of see if there's something you want just, you know, get involved in. And that's where I realized how broad the field is, how interested I was specifically in cyber security. And that's also kind of where I found the security operations position just kind of housing to know about that. So those are the two main things I'm involved with outside of twirling in school. Yeah.

Gavin Kelly

So a full plate. Yes. Absolutely, absolutely. Yeah, you kind of led me to my next question. Let's, let's talk about that specific interest in cyber security that's a field that I know the university's placed kind of a spotlight on. Over the last few years. There's a growing interest slash, needs. Slash, you know, that's, that's, that's a very important thing, again, like it is one of the fields that I know the university has kind of placed an emphasis on, on specializing in. So you're a junior, you've got Are you going to graduate in the spring of next year? Right on time? Or I'll

Tess Gardner

be I should. I'm planning to graduate may 2027

Gavin Kelly

okay, what is the goal after graduation with your your computer science degree, your cybersecurity concentration, like, what do you hope to do after you graduate?

Tess Gardner

After I get my bachelor's degree, I have decided I would like to pursue a master's in computer science, so I'll be around another year. Then after

Gavin Kelly

you keep twirling when you're as a graduate student, or they would,

Tess Gardner

I'm not 100% sure if I will twirl or not. We'll see. I think it'll just, I would like to figure out a little bit more about the course load for

Gavin Kelly

grad school. They're very, very smart. But

Tess Gardner

after that, you know, I just would love to establish a full time career in cybersecurity. Not really sure where that will take me yet. I would love to work for the government, obviously. And, you know, I could really end up anywhere. I would like to go back to Birmingham or back to Alabama, but I'm not 100% sure yet. It'll really just depend on where I'm able to get a job.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, it's kind of, that's kind of true for everybody. I think right now it's like, I'll just take whatever job will help me just get my foot in the door exactly. I just need to get a career start here. The job market's a little tough, but, yeah, who knows? I mean, you may, I'm sure by the time you graduate, you'll have options. I'm hoping you do. I think you will. So very nice. Let's talk about the security operations center, the SOC, the SOC, whatever we want to call it, that's a pretty new thing.

Tess Gardner

Yes, we just are the first cohort of hires, which I was part of, started in February.

Gavin Kelly

Your student worker. There you have, you know, you have students working there. But it, it's not just like a job for practice. You're actually, you know, serving the universe, bolstering the it of the university, yes, so talk about kind of what it does and what your role

Tess Gardner

is like there. So we are all considered. We're students, talk analysts, of course, we're student workers, but we are doing real hands on cyber security. So it is a great way to be on campus, you know, like, I can walk to work, but I'm walking to work and I'm getting real legitimate hands on experience that looks great, you know, for like starting my career, starting to set up my career, it what it is is we get security events that happen on campus, and it's our job to. Decide whether it's a legitimate threat or if it's just, you know, benign. It's not that serious. You know, this isn't a threat. No action is needed at this time. So for example, we get a lot of mass downloads that will trigger where a professor or student is just downloading a bunch of files, but that can be seen that gets triggered a lot as a threat, because there is always that possibility that someone malicious could be downloaded, much of like they hacked into someone's account, is download a bunch of very valuable information, you know, and that's like ransomware, where they'll take it and you have to pay them to get the data back. So we look into mass downloads, or if there's suspicious IP addresses that have been trying to get, you know, through the firewall, we'll kind of investigate, like, Where's his IP address coming from? Were they actually able to get through? Like, are they sending data through or not? Our job is really to take a lot of the work off of our IT guy, Danny, so now he, instead of seeing every single thing, he gets the escalated events. So if we decide that there are red flags, you know, there's a suspicious IP address, or someone's downloaded malware on accident, or anything to that nature. We're the ones. We'll escalate to him, kind of tell him what's going on, and he'll take care of it from there. Yeah. So our main job is just to investigate secured events that have been triggered on campus, and we'll kind of take a look into them. Yeah.

Gavin Kelly

So really helping to protect the university sensitive information.

Tess Gardner

I love it, because I feel like even though it's a small student worker job, we really are making a difference, a true difference, in the security on campus, which I think is really cool.

Gavin Kelly

And it's one of those, it's one of those jobs where you know when you're doing it well and you're doing it right, most people will know you're doing it because you're doing you're nipping the threats in the bud before they're a problem. And that's very interesting, and it's, it's needed, and it the the actual center is a cool place, too.

Tess Gardner

It is. I like it in there, there's seven deaths. Normally there's five or seven of us in there time. And I remember when we were training, and one of the guys mentioned that, because we have, like, a

different company that trained us, you know, and they were kind of, they were kind of, like, over us, and one of them mentioned that some of the guys that he worked with became some of his closest friends. And I was like, Yeah, I mean, we'll see. I don't know, I don't know any of these people, but honestly, I do love my co workers. I love I look forward to going into work. I love seeing my co workers. We all get along pretty well, and so that's great, you know, we all kind of collaborate. We'll talk about the security events that come in, kind of, you know, decide as a group, like, what to do, or, you know, give each other insight on what's going on. So it's really a great place to be. I really do enjoy it. So I'm excited, you know, it's gonna keep growing.

Gavin Kelly

So exactly, is everyone in there? Pretty much a computer science major young,

Tess Gardner

yes, either computer science or cyber engineering. Okay, I think we just got a couple of kids that are cis majors. Yeah, those are the main majors.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, because, I mean, like, it's, like we talked about at the beginning, something like that kind of intensive. Not only do you have to have the know how, but you don't usually get that know how without having a passion for it. Like, right? People don't normally just, like, take up coding and computer science. He stuff as like, Oh, I'm just bored, and I'll do it for fun, right? So, what has working in the SOC kind of taught you about your own love and your own passions for cyber security. Like, what has anything Have you changed? You know, the way you approach your field at all work in there a

Tess Gardner

little, I would say it's definitely solidified my passion. You know, I already knew I was interested in it through the research group that I've been going to and just my classes in general. And you know, there probably was always someone with like, what if I don't like this? But I really do enjoy it. It's very interesting. It's most definitely solidified my passion. Reassured me this is a career I would like to pursue. And so I really just enjoyed that. I really, you know, again, been able. I really just love to get my hands dirty a little bit, you know, messing with real technology that will be used, you know, in a for a career in the future. So that's really cool.

Gavin Kelly

We tech loves, also boasting about an emphasis on hands on learning experiential and they follow through there, for sure. I mean, like you look at every major and there is some degree of interactive, hands on experiential learning. So that's a very obvious and clear cut example. Yes, you mentioned that part of the appeal of Louisiana Tech was that you knew the computer science program was, was a quality program. What? What makes the computer science program here Great? Why has it been great for you?

Tess Gardner

Like I said, one of the biggest factors is because we're smaller. You know, all the professors are great, and they'll remember you. I love walking through the engineering building or netkin, which is where

some computer science classes are and, you know, they'll smile at you so they'll remember your name, like, hey, Tess, how are you doing today? I love that. I love I've made some great friends, and I do a lot of our, like you said, going back to hands on, a lot of our classes are very hands on from the beginning. Lot of coding assignments, you know, literally hands on, practicing code. A lot of labs, you know, working with others, which I think is great in the field of computer science, especially, you know, a lot of us are maybe a little bit introverted, so we've had some, a good bit of group projects sprinkled in throughout what I've, you know, classes I've taken so far. So I've enjoyed that getting to work with others kind of working towards a common goal. All of that, you may

Gavin Kelly

not have an answer to this question. It's okay if you don't. Okay if you don't. But between the twirling, the classes, the work, your job, you know, when you do have free time, what do you like to do in your free time? What are those hobbies that may be different from your other interests and goals?

Tess Gardner

I always love to read, ever since I was kid. I love reading, especially, you know, fantasy books. I'm also definitely a big family girl. I love my family. If I'm at home, I'm with my family whenever I'm free. Love spending time with them. So that's probably the big things, you know, obviously spending time with my friends. But yeah, it is definitely. I'm pretty limited in free time at the moment.

Gavin Kelly

I was like, if you if you tell me that, well, I don't really have a chance to do anything ever. I'd be like, that makes sense. But it's good that you have a little bit of time here and there. How often do you get to go home and see your family?

Tess Gardner

Really, only on big breaks, yeah, because it is five and a half hours, it's hard to do 12 hours on a weekend. Yeah, of course. So the only times I've been home, I've only been home once since the school year started, for fall break, and then I'm going back next week for Christmas but, and then, you know, Easter circle, those dates, I can find a weekend to go home, but it's I'm usually studying a lot. I have exams, you know, every couple weeks, usually, and their exams, I just sit down for several days and study. So, you know, it's hard for me, because obviously I do prioritize school to, you know, think like I'm going to be driving 12 hours a weekend when I should be studying. So yeah, that's hard, but we I FaceTime my mom all the time. We're best friends. We still we stay in touch, because I love my family, but, yeah, that's sweet.

Gavin Kelly

Let's bounce back a little bit and talk about twirling some more. What is a typical game day? Maybe even a game week. What does that look like for you?

Tess Gardner

So I do. I love game days are really fun, and that's something too. You know, we're a smaller school, and I think a lot of people, especially like outside tech, underestimate the game day experience here at Louisiana Tech, but just like when I toured here, it still it feels like home. I love like the tight knit

community is a good word. So I always look forward to game days. It's, we have practice four times a week. So that's, you know, that's Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. Sometimes the week of games, we'll have a pep rally Friday night. It depends on, you know, the weather, what's going on on campus. So we'll sometimes have a pep rally the night before, and then the day of. We, if we have a game on Saturday, we'll have practice that morning, and then go home, you know, get ready, do all my hair, my makeup, get my costume ready. And then we first, we have the Bulldog walk, which is really fun because as the marching band, we'll have a little parade, and then we form a tunnel, and then the football team walks through the tunnel. We play the fight song. That's super fun. And then that gets the crowd fired up. So we'll go back to Argent pavilion, and we do a little pep rally there, and that's super fun. I love it. And the tail gaining there is awesome. All the free food. Everyone's so nice. And you know, if you're friends or family, you know they can come support you watch the pep rally. That's super fun. Then we usually give about an hour of free time there to enjoy the pep rally. I mean, the tailgate ourselves good, which is great. So I love that, especially when I have family come in. They're super supportive. They love coming to games whenever they can. So that's great. And then after that, we'll get ready for pre game. And then we will perform pre game. Do you know the fight song, almater, you know, Anthem, all of that. And then we do, we form a tunnel again for the football and then, you know, they run out. You do, like fireworks, play music. That's super fun. And then we'll go in the stands, you know, the band will play me and grace, shake our pom poms while they play music. And then we'll do half time. And then after that, it'll be the rest of the game. We'll cheer some more, and then we'll play the Alma Mater at the end of the game.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, a full busy day. I'm sure, every time you know, you've mentioned like, being able to be creative and being able to, like, have some artistic expression when it comes to feature twirling. I don't know enough about twirling to know if I'm asking this question correctly, but what are some of your favorite tricks? Like, what is your favorite thing to do with the baton?

Tess Gardner

My favorite trick is a leap walk over. So toss it and do a split leap and then front walk over. Okay, that's my personal favorite trick. It's been my favorite trick since, like, the 11th grade. I love it so you've had in your back pocket for a long time. I've whenever I first found out that was trick. Again, this actually, this goes back to eighth grade. I saw this girl do that trick, and I was like, that's the coolest thing I've ever seen in my life. Like, I just, I love that trick. And then when I was able to catch it, it was really a really, like, a big moment for me, because I was like, I. I still remember the moment of I could never fathom catching that trick, and now it's my favorite trick.

Gavin Kelly

So very nice. Yeah. And then comes the time we have to actually do it in front of a crowd, and you get little butterflies. And then, yeah, I'm sure, yeah, okay, maybe this isn't the most fun thing to talk about, but, you know, nobody's perfect. I'm sure there's been a time or two where you've had a drop in times like that. The show must go on, right? You just pick it up and keep going. What happens there?

Tess Gardner

You like to just put just pretend it didn't happen. And then you have to convince yourself no one saw it. People did see it. But you tell yourself that no one saw it. It's fine, you know, just keep going. That is one thing about twirling is it is very mental. Is a very mental sport. It's really hard sometimes, because, you know, you have these tricks where it's like, you go into practice one day, and it's like, I know I can catch this trick. Why can I not catch it? You know, you're wrapping the trick feels like 10,000 times you can't catch it. You know, you really have to just sit back and reframe the way you think. Sometimes it's very important. Your mindset is very, very important for twirling. I've learned I rely a lot on affirmation, just kind of cheesy, but you really have to tell yourself, that works, yeah, I can catch this trick, you know, like, I'm worthy. I deserve to be here all the important things. But, yeah, it's very twirling is very big about recovery, even, like in competitions, you know, when you're being judged, like recovery is, like, one of the categories they want to see, you know, because no one's expecting perfect. Expecting perfection. No one's Well, football is different. At twirling like competitions, you know, people aren't necessarily going to expect you're not going to drop the baton, because they understand it's going to happen. It's more about, are you going to recover for from it? How do you respond to it? Do you let it ruin the rest of your routine? Or do you accept the One Drop and keep going like it didn't happen. Yeah.

Gavin Kelly

And you talk about, you know, being able to speak those affirmations to yourself and get your head right for something like that, when you get good at that, for one thing, it kind of bleeds over, and other things, right absolutely does when school gets tough, or when you have a big exam coming up, like, I'm sure you've gotten good at being able to sort of realign your focus.

Tess Gardner

Yes. And I would say thrilling is just taught me a lot of life lessons in general, especially about goal accomplishments or goal achievements, is just kind of, I would say, my determination, you know, and like my work ethic, has definitely bled into other aspects of my life, which always been a hard worker. But I think ever since I've started twirling, it's just made my motivation in all aspects of my life kind of go up a notch. Yeah, so I definitely do apply those kind of life lessons to everything.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, and I guess too, it's good that you're able to get something like that out of twirling, because that means when the bittersweet day comes where you're not twirling on a regular basis anymore, yeah, you still have that with you, and you're still going to carry that with you into your career, into your life, into your future, family, whatever. So it's good to know that that's something you can get out of it that's kind of beyond the sport itself. Yes, 100% let's I'm gonna give you an opportunity to brag on yourself a little bit, even though, you know You seem pretty humble thinking about the freshman version, version of tests that came to Louisiana Tech, and thinking about you now, in the middle of your junior year, you know, you got a year and a half left, talk to me about how you think you've changed, and how you think you've grown, and how you think again, the potential that you had coming in, how you think you've capitalized on that, and How you think you're realizing that potential,

Tess Gardner

I would say I've definitely branched out more in college, you know, I was pretty quiet high school, so I really wanted, I always knew I wanted to go out of state. I always knew I wanted to go somewhere new

people, you know, find a new find something new with all new people, like just a little bit, you know, fresh start. And so I really tried, obviously, to branch out. And so I loved, I've loved joining the sorority and been able to meet new people, like freshmen me. Was able to see the great people I've met through my sorority, through a band, through even I like I said, work, she would be so excited. And even the security operation center position, you know, like, that's, I really was definitely proud of myself for that, and being able to, you know, put myself in a position where I was able to earn that opportunity, and being involved enough that people notice me, and, you know, were wanting me to work, and then, you know, kind of invest myself in that. So that's been really great. I definitely would never have been able to foresee that when I first got here. So really, I'm just proud of myself for putting myself out there, you know, continually showing up, showing I care. All this great things,

Gavin Kelly

very good. And, you know, we, we kind of said that the lights at the end of the tunnel a little bit, but again, a year and a half, it is gonna, it's gonna be another while. So you just have, you have to stay locked in for a year and a half.

Tess Gardner

It just gets harder. Yeah, a lot of people say their senior year for computer science is the worst. Something look forward to that's okay, you know, I still look forward to it. We'll, I'll start my capstone senior year of next year. Here at the beginning, and

Gavin Kelly

what's the capstone project like in computer science?

Tess Gardner

It's basically, you kind of just come up with a new innovation. A lot of people will get a business to sponsor them, okay, so that they get, you know, money and fundings, and normally it'll be something that will benefit their company. So you're with a group, I think, of five people around there, and you'll kind of, you know, it's a year it's pretty much year it's pretty much a year long process. Yeah, it sounds like it needs to be, yeah. So I'm excited for that.

Gavin Kelly

Yeah, it's, you're gonna your full plates gonna get fuller, I'm sure, yep. But talking to you today, it's, it's, it's easy to see that you, you welcome the challenge that you I do. You value, you know, hard work, and you enjoy knowing that you're able to work hard and get things done. And it seems like you know, for somebody who is as busy as you are, you have a lot of energy and you have a good attitude. So thank you stay, stay with that mindset if you can, because when it gets tough, it'll serve you well. But again, I appreciate you making time for us. And if you're listening again, I hope that Tess's story and hearing this interview today has kind of helped shed some light and maybe enhance the her story in the magazine a little bit more. But Tess, I appreciated having this conversation with you today. Good luck moving forward. I think everybody on campus should rest a little easier at night knowing we have a good team of student workers protecting our cyber our cyber information out there, but again, good luck. I think you're going to be able to achieve all the things you hope to achieve.

Tess Gardner

Appreciate it. Go Dogs.

Gavin Kelly

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