**HFNT #19: Swing For The Fences**

**Episode Transcript**

[INTRO MUSIC]

Scott: Happy Friday, North Texas. I'm Scott.

Alicia: And I'm Alicia.

Scott: Today is Friday, February 14th, and we've got a fun show for you today, guys.

Alicia: That's right. In honor of February being American Heart Month, we're going back to “The Lab” to learn about how I could be used to predict and prevent heart attacks. We have a little preview of you in Spring Preview and Grad School Preview events coming up next weekend. And, with the UNT softball team’s home opener coming up next week, we've got an interview with two senior players who have become besties since being paired up as roommates their freshman year.

Scott: Can't wait to get to all that, Alicia. But first, you know we have to catch up.

Alicia: Scootle! Happy Valentine's Day, man.

Scott: Yeah, Happy Valentine's Day. How are, how are you and the boyfriend celebrating while you're doing the long-distance thing?

Alicia: Well, unfortunately, we will not be celebrating on the actual day, but we'll be celebrating it in early March. He has a work conference in Dallas, so I'll be making my way there and we'll celebrate in the Big D and grab some grub, or something romantic like that. I'm a bit of a food snob, so it'll probably be somewhere we both can't afford, but hey, isn't that what Valentine's Day is about? LOL. I'm just getting. It's actually been a busy time of year for the both of us, so we will most likely plan something more thoughtful the week of. Nothing crazy, just dinner and a movie because we're pretty satisfied with the simple things in life. What about you, Scottie? Got any big plans with the wifey?

Scott: I got her cute little gift and some flowers, but couldn't line up a babysitter, so we won't be able to go out for a romantic dinner without the kiddos. I'll probably pick up something yummy and try to get the kids to bed at a decent time so we can have a nice little dinner together at home.

Alicia: That sounds lovely, Scotty. Well, in addition to being Valentine's Day, we're smack dab in the middle of American Heart Month. So, in the spirit of heart health awareness, we are returning to our video series, “The Lab.”

Scott: Yeah, for any new listeners, “The Lab” is a video series on our YouTube channel where you and researchers talk about some of the awesome work they're doing and the impact it could have.

Alicia: Yes, sir. That is right. And this episode features assistant professor of biomedical engineering Fateme Esmailie, discussing her research on how artificial intelligence might be used to predict and prevent adverse cardiovascular events, such as heart attacks after surgery.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Esmailie: What if I could help predict and prevent heart attack? At UNT, my research involves utilizing AI to predict the outcomes of cardiovascular interventions. Mathematical models have been around to predict the outcomes of medical interventions for a while. However, solving fluid dynamics equations such as Navier-Stokes equations, can take up to one week or two weeks for, like, even one heartbeat. And so, AI can help us to reduce the time required to solve the mathematical equations. We receive the patient data from physicians, and then we will turn this data into sometimes 3D models of that patient. And then, we will use the mathematical models and some physics to predict what will happen after an intervention or during an intervention. And we used a laser to shine light to this model. We add particles, which take can reflect these laser lights. And then, we use high- speed cameras to record all these moments. So, one heartbeat is about point-eight seconds. So, if the heartbeat is point-eight seconds, we can get the data at point-eight seconds. One of the adverse events of some cardiovascular surgeries, for example, or replacing a heart valve, can be blood-clot formation on those medical implants. So, if we can predict when it happens and how long it takes as it happens, then we can prevent it by helping physicians to prescribe the exact amount of anticoagulants. We can develop a method that can predict blood-clot formation very quickly. And then, also visually, we can look at different methods that we can prevent. Thanks for joining me today in “The Lab.” Check out the playlist in the description to see more videos from “The Lab,” and hit that subscribe button.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: So, I have to admit, I'm a little bit of an AI skeptic, but I can definitely get behind using it to improve medical outcomes. Hearing about it, being able to predict and prevent heart attacks, after what I went through last year, I'm selfishly like, “Could it have predicted my stroke?” Like, “Hey Scott, given your current blood pressure and the temperature and humidity, maybe don't go for a run today. Your brain might break. Thanks, AI.”

Alicia: Yeah, I know right? Talk about a real-life game changer. Be sure to check out the show notes if you want to watch the episode of “The Lab” on YouTube or to see the rest of the series, and make sure to subscribe to our YouTube channel so you can see all the awesome content our video team creates. Speaking of awesome things happening at UNT, I hear you got a little preview of our preview events coming up next weekend.

Scott: That's right. So, every spring and fall, our Admissions and Recruitment teams host these preview events, one specifically for undergrad students and one for graduate students. These events give students who are considering UNT a chance to explore campus, talk to different departments and student orgs, and learn why UNT is the perfect place for them. All right, Winston and Dana, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us on the podcast today.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: All right, Winston and Dana, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us on the podcast today.

Winston: Absolutely. Thank you for the invite, Scott.

Dana: Yeah, glad to be here.

Scott: So, we'll start out just super basic. What is UNT Preview?

Winston: What isn't UNT Preview? So, Scott, UNT Preview is basically a university-wide open house. We essentially have a really great coalition of faculty, staff, student organizations, all of which, on top of all the other things that they're doing are really, recruitment-minded and recruitment-focused, and they see the value in, you know, having one big day on campus. And they understand that, for our families that we're trying to serve, having a single day to get virtually every single question they could ever think of answered is really valuable. We have students come from all over Texas. We also have students come from outside of Texas for the big UNT Spring Preview. And it's basically the most informative single day on campus you can get. It's also a conference, essentially. It's, you know, for the morning, we have different sessions where students can attend presentations with the faculty and the staff, learn about their college, learn about the career center, learn about the Office of Disability Access, lots of other friends. And we also open up the afternoon for more of a choose-your-own-adventure-style where folks can take tours. They can enjoy free lunch by our awesome Verde Catering team. And a lot of really, just a lot. They can tour the residence halls. Like I said, if there was ever a day for anybody to come to campus and learn everything they wanted to know about UNT, it's absolutely UNT Preview.

 Scott: Nice. And, what makes this spring's UNT Preview extra special?

Winston: In addition to everything I just said, I'm actually really excited that Dana is here because for the first time in many, many years, you know, UNT Preview, the name has typically meant an undergraduate recruitment event for prospective freshmen and transfer students. But this year, we have a surprise for all of our UNT preview guests. Dana, can you tell us more about it?

Dana: Yeah. So we're excited to be able to utilize the wide-open access that UNT provides to extend that to prospective graduate students. So, that’s anybody who's looking for a master's degree, a doctoral degree, maybe even a certificate program. This allows students who are thinking about taking that next step and looking at graduate school as a way to open their career opportunities, maybe even change careers. We've talked to a lot of students like that. And we have the same types of elements that our undergraduate students are experiencing during their time on campus. But similarly, with access and listening to faculty talk about program options, and also with staff providing information on student resources that are unique to graduate students. And so, we have a lot of people who are coming back to school after a while and kind of wondering, you know, `Can I really do this?’ You know, `Can I work full time and go to grad school’ or, you know, `What is it going to take for me to leave this this one type of work that I've been doing, leave that behind and try something different?’ So, we're excited to be able to have all of that aspect happening on the same day. We will be pretty much keeping folks a little bit separate to make things a little bit easier. So, we do have the same conference-style activities for our prospective graduate students to be able to choose in some breakout sessions. If they want to attend sessions like funding grad school, or maybe they want to attend a session that's a little bit more specific about their program. So we've got some great content in addition to campus tours and an academic and resource fair where students can talk a little bit more one-on-one with people that represent our graduate school programs.

Scott: Very nice. Tell me a little bit more about who the event is for. Do students need to have already been accepted or have already applied to be able to come to Preview?

Winston: Excellent question, Scott. And I'm happy to say, actually for both the undergrad and the grad level, I'm going to let Dana talk about grad. But really, this day is for anybody out there who is interested in learning more about UNT and how we help our students achieve their dreams. There's going to be content for everybody, regardless of where you are at in the application process. You know, at the undergrad level, you know, the content is helpful for I'd say high school juniors and above, but it's never too early for somebody to start learning the tips and tricks on admissions and scholarship selection or scholarship awarding. My goal, as an event planner working for the Office of Admissions, is that I want everybody out there to come to UNT in a very different way than the way I came to UNT, which was by taking my S.A.T. for the first-and-only time spring break of senior year, resulting in a fabulous scholarship package of zero dollars and zero cents. Last choice of residence hall, last choice of orientation. I could not have done this whole college- selection process worse. And yet, don't worry, everybody, there's a happy ending. I did graduate on time in four years, had some great on-campus positions. But I want, you know, I want everybody's choice to come to UNT to be one that is well informed and well-researched. And so, whether you've been accepted to UNT or not, there's going to be something for you at UNT Preview. A couple things I wanted to highlight on the actual presentation, the, what we call Student Interest Session or Academic Interest Sessions. We will have, you know, for my students who haven't been accepted yet, who are just like, `Hey, I'm a junior and I'm interested in learning more about, like, what does it mean to get a, you know, to, to apply to a university? How do I actually do that?’ We have plenty of great things, great options. We've got our UNT Bound, the admissions process. We do this in English and in Spanish so we can, you know, you can be in a room listening to an admissions recruiter give you a wonderful introduction to UNT, as well as explain to you the steps, the timeline, and how do you make sure that you are or not, how do you make sure you are getting a great scholarship package and not zero dollars like I did. For our accepted students there's, you know, `I'm admitted, now what?’ that's offered by our Office of Orientation and Transition programs who basically say, `Hey, congratulations. Pat yourself on the back. Let's talk about all the incredible things that the Office of Orientation is going to do for you in the coming months to help you get register for classes and help you with that transition to college.’ Also, for admitted students, another great one, Housing and Residence Life. You know, the housing application opened up really recently. And housing, in addition to having sessions, they're going to have some of the residence halls open for our guests to take tours of. Something different this year is that not every single residence hall will be open, but they are, they're consolidating their, their housing ambassadors to be able to tour all the different room and bathroom combinations on campus. So, it won't be every single residence hall, but it will be a representative sample of all the different types of room layouts and bathrooms we have on campus. So, yeah, anybody who wants to know about UNT, prospective student, admitted student, this is the event for you. So, I promise you, if you come, it's going to be worth it. At the very least, we're going to feed you free food. College students, grad and undergrad, we all need a free meal.

Scott: There you go.

Dana: Yeah. And, I think, you know, I'll tack on, before I jump into the grad stuff. But as a parent of children who, they've actually now gone through college, but I remember attending these preview events in order from a parent's perspective to really get a sense of what is my child going to go through. You know, as a, you know, when you care for these, these children for 18 years or so and then, you know, this is going to be a brand-new experience and a whole different world and environment sometimes. And so, you know, I think often the parents are just as interested to absorb, you know, what is going to be happening. And, and obviously, there's some key information that parents like to know. Certainly, housing and financial aid are huge. But I think it just gives that, that opportunity for students and parents to really, you know, come together to be able to make those informed decisions, you know, like Winston mentioned. And, I think also I'll, you know, put in my, my other kind of personal anecdote is that, someone who is a nontraditional student coming back to UNT, we have something for everybody, right? So, it's not just the students who are needing to come into campus for the first time, but also for those who maybe just need to complete their degree, there's a great opportunity for them to really come in and find out, `How can I just get this completed and, and move on to the next step?’ And, and some of those students, I'll kind of segue into the grad stuff now. But we, we're looking for anyone who's interested in obtaining an advanced degree to check out the Grad School Preview options. And so that can be, you know, anybody who's started to think about that process and what that looks like. Certainly, any students who have applied but haven't really fully committed to the idea of jumping into classes just yet. Also applied, admitted students. You know, sometimes we have students at the grad level who have never actually stepped on campus, but go through the application process, get admitted and then they're like, `OK, well, I did all of that because I'm familiar with that process.’ They did that when they went through their undergraduate career. `But now I really want to see, like, you know, what is there, what is this going to look like for me?’ And particularly because UNT has more than, I think, 85 different degree options that are completely online for graduate students. And so, that's a significant amount of people who may not ever have to come to campus. But we experience a lot of those students who like to step foot on campus, right? They want to know that there is a face with the name. Maybe that they're getting emails from or talking with on the phone. And so, this is a great opportunity for that student to really get a sense of how the University of North Texas is going to care for them and be that, that resource that they're going to need, even if they will ultimately be a fully online student. So, again, kind of, just like Winston mentioned or look, you know, anybody, and that could be parents of, prospective undergraduate students, right? That's kind of back to the parent angle that, you know. We've talked to several parents who were coming initially to talk with their, their child about coming to UNT for their undergraduate degree. But then they think, `You know, while I'm here, maybe I should just get an MBA.’ Right? Or they can be, students together at the same time. We've seen that happen several times. So, again, we do, need people to register for either of those events. And you can find, that information on the UNT admissions event web pages. I think we'll probably get the URL out here in just a moment, but, that is definitely something that will make things easier is to get pre-registered for the events.

Scott: Yeah, that I'm glad you said that. That was going to be. My next question is, do people have to register in order to go? So, we'll definitely be sure to include those links in the in the show notes.

Dana: Great.

Winston: And, Scott, just for, I guess for full disclosure to your listeners, both Dana and I are proud UNT alumni. So, we believe in what we're selling you guys. It is a wonderful university education and career-advancement opportunity to me. And again, it all starts at Preview. It starts with one day on campus. Come here, join us for Preview, and I promise you, you're going to leave with as many answers to all the questions you could ever think to ask. Probably some answers that you didn't even think of asking because we're here for you.

Scott: Very nice. Since you mentioned it, I have to ask anytime I have an alum on the podcast, what year did you graduate and what did you study? What was your major?

Dana: OK, so, my story a little bit unique. I kind of mentioned I had the, the nontraditional route, and, I was on the18-year plan for my undergraduate degree. But one of the things I like to mention about this is, you know, life happens, and, and you take some courses, maybe, and, and you go, you know, live some life and then you maybe come back and that's, that's what happened to me. And, fortunately, I was, I was at a place where I could come back to UNT and say, `You know what? I've got a lot of hours. I just need to finish.’ And so, the Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences is what fit the best for me and was able to help me complete my degree. And then, luckily, I actually found a job at UNT doing just amazing things. I’ve been here about 20 years doing, doing this job, and I just love it. So, like Winston said, I'm excited to kind of share that excitement. So, my Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences in 2005, and then I just graduated with my master's in Workforce Leadership and development here at UNT this past December.

Scott: Awesome. Congratulations.

Dana: Thank you.

Winston: Yeah. As the rest, as they say, is history for me. I got to UNT, you know, after that total lack of preparation I talked about earlier I got here as a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed freshman, and this would have been August of 2010 is when I got to campus for the very first time. And, four years later, I graduated with my Bachelor of Arts in History, after changing my major probably five times before I landed on history. I knew that I was interested in. You know, history is a subject I'm passionate about. And I also was, at the time thinking, I wanted to go into education, secondary education. My dear, sweet mother, you know, once I graduated, I was, you know, still looking for career prospects after, you know, like, `What do I want to do?’ In my history program, I did not do the teacher certification. So, as I was kind of bouncing around different options of, like, `How might I go about getting that?’ My dear, sweet mother, she was on indeed.com and saw a position, Recruiting Specialist One, and said, `Winston, I know you love UNT, and I know you love Denton, and I know you love your, you know, your Avett Brothers cover band that you've been playing in for forever. Why don't you just go back? Why don't you throw your name in the hat for this recruiting position in the Office of Admissions? I said, `Yes, ma'am,’ and thankfully, I was able to get the job. I started working full time for UNT September of 2014. And, and over the … I took one year of just professional work before I felt my brain was rotting. And I was like, `I need to get back into the classroom. I miss I miss education.’ So, my graduate program began as a master's in teaching, Master of Education in teaching in, fall 2015. And I was enjoying that program. I realized why it is one of the best, one of the best and nationally recognized online teacher-education programs. As I was getting more into, though, you know, admissions and I was, you know, going through my career, I had a change of priorities about where I, where I thought I wanted to do my teaching. So, long story short, I got almost at the end of a master's of education in teaching, kind of to Dana's point about, you know, your path will take you … you know, it's not about the path, it's about the journey, right? I actually ended up getting, I ended up deciding I wanted to pursue a master of arts in history, and actually pursuing history at the graduate level. So, unlike an undergrad, you can't just change your major. So, I had to take the GRE, I had to get, you know, get accepted into the history program. But I got in, into the Master of Arts and History program fall 2019, and I graduated in December of 2022. Did it take longer than my undergrad? You bet it did. But I made it, and I thank our faculty every single time I get a chance to for helping me through to the very end.

Scott: Yeah. That's great. Always nice when you can really believe in the product that you're selling through.

Dana: And I think, Scott, that's one of the, the highlights that people can appreciate when they attend UNT and Grad School Preview is hearing stories like mine or Winston's, but also from other current students that we'll have at the event. And, and hearing about people's backgrounds and their, you know, their pathway and how they got to UNT and, and, and the success stories, like Winston and myself, I think really do help to, to really make people understand about the magic that happens at the University of North Texas and, and why we bleed green. I think it's just evident when you attend these events. And, that's really again, that's where the magic happens.

Scott: Awesome. Love that. Winston, you mentioned a few of the sessions. I was looking at the schedules, tons of different options, lots of information. And if your younger self was attending Preview and, in Dana's case, Grad Preview, give me one, two, maybe three sessions of like `You have to attend this. This is awesome. This is fun. This is really informative.’ What would you tell yourself you have to go see?

Winston: Oh, Scott. There's, like, at least, there's at least 60 different sessions happening. So …

Scott: Top 20.

Winston: If I must limit myself only to three, three event highlights that I want to, that I want to share, I would say for my first Student Interest Session at 9 a.m., something I desperately needed to know was how to choose my major. So, our Office of Advising Services, they have actually a really cool three-step Exploring Majors action plan that they do with their students. So, I absolutely would recommend if you're if you're between majors, or even if you know what you want but you're just interested in, you want that, you want that validation that, `Yes, your choice is an informed and well-researched choice,’ How to Choose Your Major is a really great, a really great place to start. For the Academic Interest Sessions, again, there's even more academics than there are for the Student Interest Sessions. But, really, as long as you go to any Academic Interest Session, which will be at 11 a.m. and at 12 p.m., respectively, any of these are going to be really great overviews of the academic programs within that college. For example, in our College of Engineering, they actually break it out by department. So, there's going to be a biomedical academic interest session, a construction and mechanical engineering major, computer science and computer engineering, you know. So, they are going to get pretty granular and major- specific, which is great because we want our guests to have that detail. The other thing I would say you absolutely, if I'm specifically speaking to young Winston, who had not applied on time, a huge, huge, huge draw for this Spring Preview is that we're actually going to have an application station. I guess stations. We have two computer labs reserved on campus for any prospective student. And I'm going to be careful with my language here to make sure I get all of the disclaimers right. So, we are going to be at Preview. We will be waiving the application fee for undergraduate and graduate students who apply on site on event day, actually in our labs with the help of our staff and our G-Force Mentors. So, if you're a, if you're out there and you're a high school senior or a high or transfer student, if you're coming, if you're looking to come to UNT for summer of 2025, fall of 2025 or spring of 2026, any open application, then you can apply on site for free, and we'll waive your 75-dollar application fee. What would help us, and what would help you again, maximizing your time at preview. Make sure if you're an undergrad, you come to Preview knowing your Apply Texas login information or your Common App login information. You can do everything except submit the app before you come to campus. So, we'd love for everybody who wants to take advantage of that 75-dollar fee waiver, or if you're an international student, 85-dollar fee waiver. Anybody who's listening we’d love to make sure that, you come to campus, come to Preview, with your login credentials known. The only restriction on that application-fee waiver for, on the undergrad side is that while international transfer students will qualify for the fee waiver, international freshman unfortunately will not for this event. But that's the huge thing that I would absolutely recommend. If you are a high school senior who hasn't applied yet, or if you're a transfer student who's thinking, maybe, `You know, I do, I do plan on coming to UNT in spring of 2026,’ if you are applying for one of those three semesters, we would love to see you at the application session and get your application fee waived.

Dana: On the grad side, yeah, we're, I just want to clear up a couple of things on the grad school application-fee waiver. This will be for, anybody who's going to apply for summer 2025 or fall 2025. And this would be for the, people who are not eligible for this, unfortunately, are international students. But you must apply on site. On the grad side, you've got a little bit more information that you're going to need to be prepared to bring. This could be even bringing letter, recommenders that may be required to submit with your graduate-school application. There are some other things. If you have specific questions about how to prepare for that, an email that you can get a lot of details from is gograd@UNT.edu. So if you just want to send a quick email to gograd@UNT.edu, we can help you kind of learn about what you need to prepare for. And just to, to kind of answer the original question, just a couple of things I want to highlight in terms of sessions and for prospective graduate students. We see a lot of people come in and, and just like, you know, `How do I get started?” Right? `I just want to know, like, what does grad school mean? What is this all about? I've heard this term but.’ We have a session called Grad School 101, and that's a great way for you to get this kind of high-level perspective of grad school and, and what to expect. We have some other sessions that, one in particular I think would be really helpful for, for prospective graduate students is to come to our Student Success Tips, right? If you, especially if you haven't been in in school for a while and you're kind of wondering about that workload and, and how to be successful, definitely attend that session. And then, finally, our Academic and Resource Fair. This is where the majority of our program representatives are going to be. So, when you want to talk directly to someone in that in that master's or doctoral program about, you know, whether it's admission requirements specifically for that program or it's, program outcomes, right? Like, `What's going to happen when I graduate with this master's degree? How's that going to help me get my, get a better job?’ Those are definitely questions to ask at the Academic and Resource Fair.

Winston: I want to piggyback also. Dana, thank you for saying Fair. Preview Day. It's a big day on campus. There's so much to do. There's too, there's more stuff to do than time to do it all. So, if as you're going through, you're thinking about coming to Preview and maybe you're worried like, `Well, you know, I won't get to see if I can only go to, you know, 3 or 4 sessions. How am I going to get all my questions answered?’ Thankfully, your admissions event planners Winston and Dana are here for you. So, I think Dana mentioned that the graduate Academic and Resource Fair, where there will be table, tables from different departments and student resources, we have the same thing at the undergraduate level called the Super Fair. At last count, I'm waiting on a couple last-minute, last-minute RSVPs, but at last count, I've got 60 academic departments, 15 student resource offices and about 20 student organizations that are going to be at the Super Fair. So, if you have questions about, you know, `I want to learn more about, you know, finance, insurance, real estate law, FIREL is going to be there from the College of Business. If you're interested in talking to a current student about how does one get involved on campus, student orgs are going to be there. So, you know, think of the Super Fair, it's towards the end of the day, think of it as a catch-all for any questions you have, or any questions that come up throughout the day.

Scott: Very nice. And then, the last question: We talked about registration earlier, but I wanted to double check what's the registration deadline like. Can people register day of or is there a cutoff?

Winston: So, we never want to turn anybody away who's interested in learning more about UNT. We do ask if you are hearing this and you're interested, if you just type in UNT Spring Preview for undergrads or UNT Grad School Preview for the graduate population, type in that name into your preferred search engine. We can maybe put the links in the in the liner notes for today's episode. But, if you pre-register, you are going to get a very detailed email, either from me or from Dana, that gives you the directions, the parking information, a link to the schedule, shows you basically all, everything you need to know will be in that email and those emails automatically hit your inbox about 24 hours before the event. So, if you pre-register, I would say if you pre-register by next Thursday, which would be the 20th of February, you will, you should get the email Friday morning with all of your UNT Preview or your UNT Grad School Preview details. With that being said, we do offer onsite registration for anybody who you know is driving through Denton, Texas, and says, `You know what? I saw the billboard. What is UNT Preview? I want to learn more.’ So, we do recommend pre-registration for just you having an easier time when you get to campus. But, yeah, we will offer onsite registration at, for both events.

Scott: Right. Good to know. All right. That covers all my questions. Is there anything we didn't cover that you want to mention about the event?

Dana: Well, I think the only thing to know is that this this is not the only time anyone can come to campus. Certainly, we offer tours all of the time. If, if you're interested in seeing the campus and you're not able to attend this event, please visit tours.unt.edu. I mentioned on the grad side, you can always email us to connect about getting more information on graduate school programs. But we also offer similar type of events twice a year. And so, there are always opportunities to connect with, with us. And I'm sure Winston will make sure to get out more information about those larger events through this channel and other ways in the future.

Winston: Yeah. To piggyback off Dana: Absolutely our doors are always open. I work here in the Welcome Center, and we offer tours Monday through Saturday. So, regardless of whether Preview or Grad School Preview fits your schedule, we do want to connect with you. We want to be that resource for not just to help get you in, but get you in strategically with scholarships and funding and get you out in four years or less, and just be there to support you guys. Like, like we kind of mentioned, we believe in this place. It's been good to us and we want to be good to it, too. And we want to pay that spirit forward to our future students like you. So, Scott, thank you so much for your invitation to invite us on to `Happy Friday, North Texas.’

Scott: Absolutely glad y'all could make it.

Dana: Thank you so much.

Scott: All right. Thank you all.

Dana and Winston: And Go, Mean Green!

Scott: Go, Mean Green.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: OMG! Preview sounds like so much fun.

Scott: I know, and there's so much good information. I was so nervous about coming here back when I was a transfer student. It really would have helped ease some of my nerves to come get a little sneak peek at Preview. If you or someone you know is considering coming to UNT, check out the show notes for links to get more information about Spring Preview and Grad School Preview. Hopefully we'll get more of that beautiful spring weather we had last week to make it even more perfect.

Alicia: Speaking of that weather, spring is in the air, Scotty, and that means it's time for some Mean Green softball. Tell us about this next interview.

Scott: I spoke to senior softball stars Cierra Simon and Skyler Savage because I love alliteration. Also, because softball season just started and the home opener is coming up next week on February 18th against Texas Tech, Cierra and Skyler talked about how both their friendship and the softball program itself has grown over the last four years, and the legacy they hope to leave.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: Did y’all start at UNT at the same time? Did y’all come in together as freshmen?

Cierra: Yes, we both came in together and we were roommates our freshman year.

Skylar: And are still roommates.

Cierra: Yes

Scott: Still roommates?

Skylar: Yes.

Scott: I was going to say how, how, how has your relationship and friendship grown over the last four years?

Cierra: We've been stuck with each other side-by-side for all four years now. We played travel ball together before this, but we really didn't get close until UNT. And I'm glad we have, because she's my best friend, so…

Skylar: Same to her.

Cierra: Yeah. Before we got here, I like, we played on the same select team for probably 2, 3 years. And, I swear, we barely knew each other. And then we got here and we’ve been stuck at the hip, so …

Scott: That's awesome. Now that you're starting your senior year here, tell me kind of, what does the program mean to you after so many years here?

Cierra: It means everything. Being here for four years, you kind of see that this is a place people come to stay. Not many people leave this program just because how good our culture is and how much we love each other. Our coaches care about us being good humans and everything. So, this program just means everything to me.

Skylar: Yeah, same to me. It means the world. I mean, I come, my family, we're all super close, but coming to this program, it meant a ton to me because the coaches treat you like family and then, so do the girls as well. And she spoke on culture and a big thing our coaches talk about is how our culture is so well, and that is because, like, none of our none of our players, like, we transfer because we just treat each other and the coaches treat us so well.

Scott: Nice. That's great. Talk about how you’ve seen the program change and grow over the time you've been here. Like, I know they've been making a lot of improvements over at Lovelace Stadium, and how you've grown and changed since you've been here.

Cierra: Since we've been here, there's been a lot of new developments with the softball field. Our freshman year, that's when we went to a regional, and then, after that we had got, I think, I believe, a new scoreboard. We got a new ground put in my sophomore year. And then, last year, we got new dugout. And then, next year, they're going to have new locker rooms and everything. So, just being able to be a part of all the new developments we're getting for UNT softball's just been amazing.

Skylar: And then, just also seeing the community grow around us. Like, coming in, like, we came into a program that hadn’t made it to a regional yet. But once we made it to that conference tournament and now regional, like, our community just continued to grow and grow and support us. So, it's just been amazing to watch.

Scott: That's awesome. This might not be something you really think about, but, you know, being your last year, I tend to think about, like, I don't know, I don't know if legacy if this is the right word, but what kind of impression do you hope you've left on, like, your teammates or on the program?

Cierra: Oof! That's a tough question. We always get asked that, or seniors get asked that at the end of the year when we do our little book reports. But I just want to make sure that I was a good person to everybody. Like, everybody felt safe and that they could come to me. I was just a good teammate to everybody. Because no matter what, like, say you hit 20 home runs or you made this many plays, you know, things like that. I think Morgan Medford, she was here last year. She said, `It doesn't matter how good your stats are. If you're not a good human, then who wants to invite you to their wedding, kind of thing?’ So, I always want to make sure I'm a good friend to everybody.

Scott: Sounds like good words to live by.

Cierra: It is.

Skylar: Kind of same going off Cierra with a legacy left behind. Definitely want to be a better person then player, definitely. But then, I would say another one for me is as a senior, you're expected to perform well and have no reaction. Well, I want to be that senior that, like all the freshmen can come to, to know that there's a smile on my face. If they're struggling a little bit, like,`It's OK. Like, you're going to go through struggles and it will be OK.’ So, just that happy person.

Cierra: Yeah.

Scott: Nice. Those are all the questions I had written down. Do y'all have anything else you want to talk about or anything?

Cierra: Yeah, no, I think we're good. We're excited for the season. I think this year is going to be a really good year. We got a lot of new faces, a lot of freshmen, a few transfers. But I'm excited to see what that holds for as nice.

Scott: Well, good luck on the season. And thank y'all for taking the time. I really appreciate it.

Skylar: Thank you for having us.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: Wow. I love a message of women supporting women. Can't wait to get out to a game at Lovelace Stadium and cheer on the Mean Green.

Scott: Absolutely. Visit MeanGreenSports.com to get tickets to the home opener against Texas Tech on Tuesday, February 18th, or to go cheer on UNT softball all season long.

Alicia: Scott, it's time for our Q&A. What are we talking about today?

Scott: Well, since today is Valentine's Day, we want to hear about UNT stories. And since I met my wife after college, this Q&A is going to be a little more one-sided than usual. Can you tell us about your young love story, Alicia?

Alicia: Why, yes, of course. Brandon and I met in my last semester at UNT in January of 2022, in a production course and one of my final media arts classes. I didn't really know anyone in that class besides my roommate. And one day my professor put the whole class into groups of three to try out some of the camera equipment, and Brandon was in that group with another girl in our class. All three of us were chatting as we took turns testing out the equipment, and both seemed easy to talk to, so, at the time, I didn't think much of Brandon at all. But after every time we had class on Tuesdays and Thursdays, he would come over and sit and chat with me as we waited for our next classes in the Media Arts building. We probably could have kept talking until we lost our voices because we just had so much in common. I was very smitten with the boy, but didn't think anything was going to come of it. I was not seeking courtship and was completely shocked when he asked for my number a whole month later. We then hung out a couple of times for movie together, but it was not officially a movie date, it was just a movie because we were friends. Because I was dying to see “Pearl” by Ti West. We ended up talking in his car until 2 a.m. after the movie finished.

Scott: Ooh.

Alicia: Yeah.

Scott: Late.

Alicia: Yeah, past my bedtime. And I had class the next day at 9 a.m., so I guess that's when we both realized we liked each other. About a month later, I hosted an Oscar party at my apartment with my roommate, and I decided to invite the whole production class because they all seemed to appreciate the pomp and circumstance of the Oscars. And, of course, Brandon was included. So, after the whole party came to a close, he approached me as I was cleaning up the mess from the party and he asked me out on a date. I was shocked and thrilled and very surprised. I was not expecting such an ask, but I immediately said yes. Obviously, the date went well because this year we are celebrating three years. Woop woop!

Scott: Nice. Well, that was beautiful. Thanks for sharing, Alicia.

Alicia: Well, now that you've heard about my love life, we want to hear from you. Tell us all about your UNT love story by emailing us at podcast@unt.edu, or calling us at (940) 565-4341.

Scott: And remember to tell a friend about the show, share it on social media, or leave us a rating and review wherever you listen. Until next time, we hope you have a Happy Friday! North Texas.

Alicia: And Go, Mean Green.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: “Happy Friday! North Texas” is a production of the University of North Texas. Today's show was produced and edited by Scott Brown with original reporting by Scott Brown. For more information, visit UNT.edu/podcast.

Scott: We are now being recorded.

Alicia: Wunderbar. Let's do this.

Scott: Sorry, you did it again. You said UNT’s softballs team.

Alicia: Aye, yi,yi, Alicia. OK, let’s go. Third time’s the charm.

Scott: Nailed it.

Alicia: Isn't that what Valentine's Day all … Whoa! But, hey, what? What does that say? Third time's a charm. Or fourth?

Scott: Nailed it.

Alicia: Yeah. Yeah.

Scott: Hopefully. Good. Well. Also, because softball season just started. And the home. Home opener …