**HFNT #14: Something Brewing**

**Episode Transcript**

[INTRO MUSIC]

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

ALICIA: And I'm Alicia.

Scott: Today is Friday, December 6th, and we've got a great show for you today, guys.

ALICIA: That's right. Today we're going to hear about a cool new program brewing over at UNT at Frisco. We also have an interview with the Business Ballerina, a student who balances studying taxation with her passion for ballet. Then, we'll have our next “Eagles Abroad” segment featuring an international studies major who called in from her semester abroad in Japan.

SCOTT: Sounds like we've got a lot of fun stuff to talk about today, Alicia, But, you know, we need to catch up first.

ALICIA: That we do.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

SCOTT: Alicia.

ALICIA: Scotty.

SCOTT: How was your fall break?

ALICIA: It was so good. I visited my parents for a few days. It's so much delicious food and watched all the football one possibly could. It was truly glorious, Scott. What about you?

SCOTT: Yeah. Same with the food and the football. And, we got all the Christmas decorations out. The tree is up, the house is lit, and the kids haven't broken any ornaments yet, so that's a big win. And I went to the movies five times in the span of eight days. You want to talk about glorious? That was a dream week.

ALICIA: Dang, bro, you saw “Wicked” five times. Are you Team Glinda or Team Elphaba?

SCOTT: Well, I only saw “Wicked” once but, not going to lie. It was probably the best movie I saw last week. Definitely Team Elphaba. She was badass.

ALICIA: All right, well, as much as I'd love to turn this into another movie review podcast because there aren't enough of those already, tell us about this interview you did about a new minor program being offered UNT Frisco.

SCOTT: Yeah, I spoke to clinical professor Andrew Snyder from the College of Applied and Collaborative Studies about you and his new Enology and Brewing minor offered exclusively at UNT at Frisco.

ALICIA: OK, so I know what brewing is, but what's an Enology?

SCOTT: Yeah, I didn't know that either. Enology is the study of wine and winemaking. This new minor offers students a multidisciplinary education in the principles of wine and beer production and distribution, including hands-on, project-based learning in viticulture and fermentation. Plus, I got some tips from Andrew on which wines are best for gift-giving to help with my holiday shopping.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

SCOTT: So, this is a new minor at UNT. Has the program started yet or is it starting in in 2025?

ANDREW: No, the program started this fall. I've taught two of the six courses, are in the process of teaching two of the six courses that are in, that make up the minor.

SCOTT: OK. And then, just tell me a little bit about it. You know, imagine, you know, kind of an elevator pitch to students of why, what kind of stuff they're going to learn and how this program can help them.

ANDREW: OK. Well, the Enology and Brewing minor that we're offering would allow a student to get the skill set necessary on a business perspective to go into the craft- beverage industry. So, you know, places like Southern Glazer’s here in Texas or Constellation Brands, which is a national brand that, you know, work with package stores, work with retail outlets. You know, they would be able to be account managers where they would be able to take that skill set and be able to, you know, as a business major or other, have a subset of, you know, a set of skills, subset of skills that would allow them to work in, again, the craft-beverage industry.

SCOTT: Very nice. And you mentioned you teach all but one of the courses. Tell me a little bit about the courses in terms of, you know, I imagine there's some lecture portion to it of just learning, you know, basic components. But I imagine there's also some kind of like practical field work type experience, too.

ANDREW: Absolutely. We want to make the minor as hands-on as possible. So, we do, you know, in the Intro to Enology course that I'm teaching right now, the craft-beverage management course that I'm teaching right now, we're visiting, making site visits to local wineries and breweries. We have guest speakers. I had the education director from Southern Glazer's, which again, they're one of the two largest distributors in the state of Texas. They’re the largest distributor in the U.S. And so, he came in, spoke about what distribution does, the three-tier system, you know, how some, you know, people, students with the skill set that they're obtaining could, you know, find employment through his company, their company, and so, you know, we try to make this hand on. You know, this year, when we just started in late August, the Texas wine industry, it was really almost finished with their harvest. But in years in the future, you know, we will include, you know, some harvest work for the students. We take them to these wineries where they look at the equipment that is being used. You know, I'm trying to get some internships set up for them to be able to work in the industry, get some experience, you know, have that resume. So, you know, I'll be teaching an Introduction to Brewing class in the spring. We will brew beer in the class. The students will learn every aspect of brewing and we will do the same thing in the wine class in the future so that, you know, we will be producing some wine under an experimental license, not for sale, but we will be able to utilize those wines and/or beers and some events that are happening on campus. You know, again, no, no sales of the products that we're making, but we'll be able ton be able to use those in a what we call a sensory evaluation-type course where we will be able to, you know, educate people on that, what they're tasting. And so, you know, the students’ products will go to.

SCOTT: Very nice. I’m curious with these courses where you're producing beer and producing wine. Is there is there any age restriction for the students? Do they have to be over 21 to take the course?

ANDREW: You know, I really do not -- sorry, Mr. Brown -- know the answer to that question as far as UNT’s policy. About six years ago now, I was able to testify at the Capitol there in Austin and we were able to change the law that says if a student is 18 years or older and they go through a wine-tasting class, as long as they spit the wine out, that is legal, so they don't have to be 21 to taste wine. And I've taught classes, you know, at a previous college where that law had gone into effect. And, you know, I tell the students, `If I don't see some, some liquid in these red Solo cups saying that you spit it out, you know, you're not going to get another sample.’ But, you know, I love my job and I don't want to lose it. That law did allow us because, you know, I would have people come into my courses in the past and of course here at UNT and say, `I'd like to be a winemaker, but, you know, if I take your classes, I got to wait till I'm 21 to be able to taste the product. You know, maybe my parents let me taste it at home. Who knows? But I can't, you know, taste it in class.’ Changing that law allowed us to go ahead and take 18-year-olds, prepare them, you know, with the skill set necessary to be a winemaker, but also have that skill set to know when a wine has challenges or when it's, you know, really well-crafted. So, being able to get them to taste earlier -- spitting the wine out, of course -- gives, you know, gives those students a leg up compared to before we passed that law here in Texas.

SCOTT: Very nice. Are there any aspects about the program that, that we haven't covered that you'd like to talk about?

ANDREW: Well, you know, like I said, we've talked about the hands-on portions. We've talked about the fact that, you know, this will give them a skill set that would allow them to gain employment, you know, after leaving UNT, which is, you know, one of our, you know, mandates. We need to make sure that, you know, we're not just putting out students that need to go, you know, flip burgers. We need students that can, you know, can get into the industry, and, you know, these should be well-paying, you know, good-paying jobs that, careers that they're starting. So, you know, that, that's one of the things I'm proud of. One of the things, one of the things that I'm proud of is that, you know, we are giving these students the skill set necessary to go into a career in the craft beverage, in the craft beverage industry. And, you know, most of these classes, I mean, there's obviously tests and PowerPoints and textbooks. But, you know, this is this is Craft Beverage 101. And people love to learn about wine and beer and spirits and, you know, all the things that that those, that industry entails. There's, you know, if you're a winemaker, there's going to be harvest days in August where it's 110 degrees and you're just going to have some, you know, some really hard work to do. But otherwise, you know, otherwise making wine in a nice, comfortable winery, cellar, being able to see the smiles on people's face when they taste the wine that you made. Same thing with beer. I just, I'm not a brewer. I've been a winemaker and a, a consultant. I owned my own winery for 12 years. So, you know, I’m a sommelier as well, a certified sommelier with the Master Court of Sommeliers. So, you know, just being able to see satisfied customers tasting a beverage that you made with your own hands is very satisfying. And so, you know, we want to be able to educate students so they could go into that industry and do the same.

SCOTT: Absolutely. You know, talking about this, there's, there have been a lot of growth in the in the kind of craft-brewery industry in recent years. This might be too broad, but what do you kind of a credit that to, that, that growth? You know, there's always more and more craft beers when you go to the, go to the stores. What do you think, you contribute to that growth, too?

ANDREW: Well, you know, COVID didn't hurt us. There were, you know, COVID shut things down, but it really did not shut down the craft-beverage industry. If anything, it kind of helped it a little bit. And, you know, the craft-beverage industry over the past decade, really two, has, you know, just grown exponentially because people are looking at alternate beverages, not just Cokes and sodas and or, you know, seltzers or whatever. And we haven't even mentioned cider. Ciders are a growing a craft beverage as well. So, you know, the growth of that industry is because people are, they're trying to be able to branch out on what they're going to have with their meal beverage-wise. And, you know, we always promote responsibility. I mean, I want you to drink a glass of wine every day for the rest of your life, but I do not want you to drink a bottle of wine every day for the rest of your life. I want you to drink responsibly. But, you know, I lived in Europe for 14 years. They were not drinking iced tea for dinner, you know, in Germany where I was at. So, they would have either a beer or a glass of wine with every meal, including lunch, and they were not getting intoxicated. They were simply pairing, you know. That's what I love to do is wine-and-food pairing. `OK, what are we having for dinner tonight? OK, well, I know I've got a bottle in my, you know, in my collection that's just going to pair perfectly with this or, you know, it should.’ And, you know, we open that bottle, and my wife and I have a glass of wine and, you know, the steak or the pasta or whatever we're having. So, you know, to me, wine-and- food pairing and having that beverage accompany the meal is really a precursor for, you know, for an enjoyable evening. And then, I believe that the growth of the industry has, you know, been in a growth cycle because people are starting to really embark on, you know, pairing craft beverages with food.

SCOTT: Very nice. And then, I want to kind of tie this into the holidays coming up a little bit. And so, I'm curious what kind of wine goes best with kind of your generic holiday dinner of, you know, turkey or ham or mashed potatoes, that kind of stuff? What would be the best bet?

ANDREW: Sure. While we always, well, we generally think of reds with red meat, you know, white with fish or chicken or pork, Pinot Noir is the perfect wine for your turkey dinner. It's a light red wine, no heavy tannins, you know, it's, it's smooth. It is going to pair with your turkey. I don't care what type of dressing your grandmother makes, or your mom. You know, the Pinot Noir is something that I would highly recommend. I'm going to spend Thanksgiving in Florida with an old Army buddy and his family. You know, I'll bring -- and that's what I like to do. You know, there's going to be six or eight of us, but I'll bring two different bottles of Pinot Noir and, you know, try to, you know, say, `Which one of these really paired well, the best with it?’ But, you know, for a group, you know, it's fun to even try, you know, different Pinot Noirs with the same meal. But I highly recommend Pinot, you know, you know, with the turkey dinner.

SCOTT: OK, so that's a good one for a holiday dinner. What about just for, like, gift-giving purposes? Is there a particular wine? Would it be the same thing, or is there something else that is more of a kind of, I don't know, broadest appeal or, a can't-miss a gift?

ANDREW: Yeah, it really would depend on the recipient. You know, you've got people who do not have a lot of experience with wines and you might want to go with something, you know, less tannic, for sure. So, maybe a Merlot or a Chardonnay for someone that didn't drink wine very often. But for, you know, connoisseurs or for people who do know a little bit more about a wine then, you know, a Napa Valley cab or, you know, any wine. And again, the price point is going to be something. Whether you go to Specs or Total Wine or World Market, wherever you go, you know, you can hit a price point, say 25- to-30 collars with a Napa Valley cab that that can really hit the spot. And people are going to open that gift up and pull it out of the wine bag and say, `Man, thanks for this gift.’

SCOTT: All right. Those are all my questions. Was there anything else you wanted to cover or talk about?

ANDREW: Well, I just wanted to say that I'm really proud that UNT has taken on this minor. You know, Tech and A&M have had wine programs at their respective universities for, for decades. And so, this really opens up, especially at the Frisco campus, the opportunity for students to broaden, you know, with this specific minor their appeal. And, you know, there's a couple of classes that even if you didn't want to do the whole minor, just understanding more about wine, you know, that's going to be helpful for you as a business person in the future. You need to know how to be able to order wine off a wine list. You need to be able to know, you know, how to talk about wines when you're in a setting with other like-minded business people. So, you know, the Sensory Evaluation class, they teach it on the Denton campus, my craft beverage class here at Frisco -- those would be fun if you've got elective classes to be able to plug in to any degree. So, you know, those classes would give you that opportunity to be able to know more about wine and to be able to discuss that with, you know, some greatness.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

ALICIA: That sounds so interesting. Why couldn't we have offered this a few years ago? I would have loved to learn more about wine for college credit. I could have been ahead of the game.

SCOTT: I know. This is a really cool opportunity for students to get hands-on experience in a growing industry. Check the show notes for a link to learn more about the Enology and Brewing program.

ALICIA: Yes, check them notes out. So, our next story comes to us from our very own Chelsey Gilbert. Chelsey spoke to business student Reece Domingue, who's working towards a bachelor's in accounting and a master's degree in taxation and data analytics while balancing her academic pursuits with her other passion, ballet.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

CHELSEY: What drew you to accounting and taxation? What got you into that?

REECE: Hmm, that's a great question. So, I always knew that I was going to go into the business field. That was my goal since I was little. I always was interested in business, you know, was voted most likely to run a bank in fourth grade.

CHELSEY: I love that? Wait, in fourth grade? So that's hilarious. I love it.

REECE: So, I was that kid that loved business and was really interested in it. So, that that kind of, I mean, that narrowed it down, like, the choice of like what majors I wanted to go into when I entered college. And it was always the one-track mind there. And I really got interested in accounting specifically after taking the first couple of accounting classes, specifically the second accounting class that I had to take at UNT, which was managerial accounting. And Professor Hilary Wang taught that class, and she is absolutely outstanding. And so, that kind of grew my love for accounting itself. But also, within that same semester, I had the invitation to be a part of the Accounting Scholars program and at that time, like I, I didn't know as much about accounting, obviously, as I do now, but I was, you know, lucky to have the opportunity and jumped on it. I saw the invitation and I was like, `OK, this could be a good path for me.’ And because I love my accounting classes, I went full force from there.

CHELSEY: Awesome. OK, great. I love that. Yeah. It's really, it's kind of a gamble when you start your freshman year if you're really going to stay attached to what you came into school for, especially if you declare your major that freshman year. So, it's kind of I feel like it's nicer when it just affirms what you want to do so you don't have to be like, `Oh, great, now I don't know what I want to do a year into.’ No, that's good. And you had great professors to help you along the way and get you even more interested. That's cool. Well, I love to hear that as a as a staff member of UNT. That’s nice to be able to write.

REECE: All of the accounting professors are absolutely outstanding. I could not have had a better time.

CHELSEY: What do you feel you've dedicated your studies to? Why is accounting important to you and why do your studies matter to you and your dreams and goals?

REECE: I feel like I've dedicated my studies to, I mean, I always think about, like what my, you know, motivation is. And a lot of it is family based because I come from, you know, I still live with my parents and my parents are like the best role models that you could ask for and all the things that I have been able to do, I couldn't have done without them. But they've also like inspired me to be the best that I can be always. So, I feel like that, that when I use the term like, `Who do you dedicate your studies to,’ it always goes to them because they've been my rock, my support system forever.

CHELSEY: That is awesome. Why does accounting matter to you and what, I guess, a good way to word it is, what do you kind of, how do you plan to use it? How do you plan to use your accounting education?

REECE: It's hard for me to verbalize exactly how to word it, but accounting is a very service-oriented field because it's really the accountant’s job to serve the public and they put the public first. And so, because of that, it is a really highly respected field for it. And there's also like a lot of guidelines that you have to use and rule following. So, I think that the main reason like why I just feel like it matters is because it's one of those professions to where you put other people before your own interests always. And what are my dreams and goals for it? I don't know exactly what the future holds. I can't predict that for myself. And so, we'll see. But, right now, I had the opportunity to intern at KHA Accountants. It is a mid-market, local firm and I have signed my full offer to work with them post-graduation. And so, my goal right now and my dream is to go and work at KHA and hopefully become an asset for them and work for them long-term. I am very lucky. There's so many things I love about KHA Well, one of the things that has been so great about working there is that they're fully, fully supportive of me still teaching dance and very accommodating of that. So, I think, like, in the foreseeable future, I will still be balancing both the accounting business life with this artistic dance-teaching side. But, again, I've been very, very lucky to have a have a firm that will that fully supports that and that's backs me 100% in my personal passions outside of just being there in the firm.

CHELSEY: Awesome. That’s very nice. That's super cool. Yeah, that's definitely, I mean, if you really care about your workers and you want them to do a good job, you need to be able to let them to have that little passionate outlet after work. Yeah, for sure. OK. So, getting down to kind of a more detailed question, what does a typical week look like for you when school is in session?

REECE: Crazy busy always. Right now, most of my classes are at night, so I have three, three-hour classes. So, that kind of limits the time that I'm actually at school. And so, the time that I'm at home I'm, of course, studying and focusing on that school work, completing assignments. I've also started studying for the CPA exam, so I’m also fitting that in. And then, in the evenings, I either go to class or – I don't either go to class. I teach almost every single night as well, teach dance almost every night. So, I go to class and I teach dance in my evenings. And then, on the weekends in the fall, at least, there's a local production of “The Nutcracker.” So, I go rehearse with them and I also am a rehearsal assistant from them. So, I will also go teach. So, that's like my typical week, at least right now.

CHELSEY: Oh, that’s all? That is awesome. Good for you. So, where is your dance company? What are all the details? How can I get that name out there? We'll start with that. We'll start with that, right?

REECE: OK, there's this can go, there's a lot of details in this question. This question about what’s your dance history -- those are loaded questions. I’ve spent my whole life studying dance. So, right now, I primarily teach at Denton Ballet Academy. This is not the company that I own. This is just where I primarily teach at. Denton Ballet Academy, it's where I grew up dancing, so all my training is there. But, yeah, at Denton Ballet, it’s my third year teaching there. I teach various different styles – pre-pointe, ballet, jazz and modern. So, that's, like, one sector. It’s in Denton. And then, I also teach with Festival Ballet of North Central Texas for “The Nutcracker,” serving as a rehearsal assistant. That's also kind of a subsector of Denton Ballet Academy. And then, I have my separate company. And with the company, I founded it a few years ago to mentor young competition and students. And, with them, I choreograph and provide one-on-one training for, like, a small number of dancers. So, I think, I think we have about ten right now, but they age from ages 8 to 18. I don't work with them on a consistent basis, perse. I mostly work with them on the spring, in the summer, and in the fall, we all dedicate that to “The Nutcracker” because they're involved with that as well. But we don't necessarily have, it is based in Denton. We rent space, local spaces and focus on that. But my company is more like a competition team versus a studio. It's not really a studio, it's a competition team where I just personally mentor those students and teach them choreography to perform in the spring at competition.

CHELSEY: I gotcha. OK.

REECE: My company, Studio D Dance Company, is not associated with Denton Ballet Academy or Festival. There just happens to be overlaps.

CHELSEY: OK, very nice. That makes sense

REECE: It’s kind of hard to explain, but …

CHELSEY: You're good. So, you kind of explained a little bit of what kinds of dance you teach. And then, about how many students do you teach?

REECE: At Denton Ballet Academy, I teach about 40, roughly. With my company, Studio D, I think I have about ten a season.

CHELSEA: OK, nice. All right, cool. All right, now for the loaded question: How did you get into dance and what is your history with it?

REECE: I have all my bullet points ready to go. Long story, multiple avenues. But, I started dance at the age of two, so really early on. I have an older sister and she also was a dancer. And so I was always that little kid that was outside of the window – or, it's a glass door at Denton Ballet Academy -- outside of the glass, looking at the dance classes and always wanting to participate. So, I was a little young to be starting when I did, but they kind of just said, `If you're potty-trained, you can start dance,’ and so they let me join. From there, both me and my sister grew up dancing together -- dancing at studios. We would be at home, dancing all the time. We'd play songs and choreograph on our own. I have a lot of very, very fond memories of dancing with her growing up. We kind of learned from each other, grew from each other. Side note: I have a younger brother, he's 12 years younger than me and he also dances,

CHELSEY: How cool.

REECE: He's included in the Denton Ballet Academy, Festival Ballet and Studio D. He dances under all three of those.

CHELSEY: Of course, he does. Of course. He has to.

REECE: But, yeah, so I started I started through my sister and us having that bond and that connection. About first or second grade is when I first joined Festival Ballet of North Central Texas’ “The Nutcracker” and from that first season of being with the production, I realized that it lit up my world. I realized that it was like the most amazing experience that I could have had, and that made me transition a few years later into studying ballet intensely. So, in fourth grade is when I started studying ballet, and from there, from there, everything kind of bloomed from there. I started taking pointe classes and really dedicating my time with that. Through my time there, I had a instructor, her name was Miss Lilia Valieva. And I had her my first couple of years of dancing, primarily in ballet, and she unfortunately passed away to breast cancer when I was in seventh grade. So, I think that was I have it up here -- I have her, like, little memorial right next to me -- that's 2014. And so, a lot of my motivation since her passing has been, `I can't give up because I'm dancing for her.’ I always have her in my mind. I always sew, like, a breast cancer pin in every costume that I wear so I have her with me. That's been a really big motivation for me to stay connected with the art form. After her passing, and kind of getting into, like, my more middle school years, I had some cool opportunities. I got to audition for several summer=intensive programs for, like, the Joffrey Ballet, Tulsa Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet, Kirov Ballet, some really big ballet schools, and got lucky to be accepted to those. And so, having those opportunities really got me to see what dance is like in different, at different schools and pushed me to be to, or inspired me to become even better, or was another form of motivation for me to further my ballet. In high school, I was more than 50 hours a week at this time. I was still training ballet intensely and I also joined drill team. Eventually, my senior year, I became the captain of my drill team, which was actually two years after my sister was also the captain of that same team. So, I got to be on the team while she was captain and that was a really great experience.

CHELSEY: I love that you and your siblings are able to have shared interests like that. That's really, really cool.

REECE: Yeah, it's been really special. Like, I couldn’t have imagined doing that without her, especially as we have some very, especially, like, in drill team, we got to compete duets together and these are, like, memories that I'll forever have and forever be grateful and not everyone gets to have with their sibling. It’s very special. Yeah. I was on drill team. I was captain my senior year and then -- I told you it was a long history. I’m sorry.

CHELSEY: You’re good. Do not apologize. It’s so interesting though. You are a busy woman, let me tell you.

REECE: I like being busy. Yeah, that's me.

CHELSEY: I do, too. I do, too. I totally get it.

REECE: So in college, I minored in dance. I don't officially have my degrees yet because I don't get anything until I graduate from the master's program. So, officially, I have my minor in December -- I'm sorry, not December, next May. So, I minored in dance, continued my dance education at UNT. Throughout my time here in my sophomore year -- my freshman year and my sophomore year, I was part of the North Texas Emeralds dance team. It's a student-run organization, and in my sophomore year I was actually the director of the team. So, I was able to choreograph a whole spring show and work with some wonderful women to put on that show and to run our organization. We had a little bit more than 50 members at that time. And, just to be able to run practices and really put all my passion into that organization, was wonderful to have early on in my college, in my time, my time at UNT. And then, that brings us to present day, where I kind of explained, like, I teach, I'm more on the teaching side than I am the side. I'm still involved in Festival Ballet. This is my 16th year dancing in it. Casting comes out in a couple of weeks. And then, yeah, I teach at Denton Ballet. I continue the side passion with Studio D, but then I'm also involved with dance in my community as well. So, there's the Denton Holiday Lighting Festival, happens every December, and I have the opportunity to coordinate the “Dancing in the Street” event there. So, it's a little, we have we have a section of the street where I'm able to invite different dance organizations around Denton and have them perform for the community there.

CHELSEY: Very nice. Awesome. Well, that is a good story right there. You're going to make a lot of people feel like they need to get up and do a little bit more in their lives. What do you enjoy about teaching dance and why you feel it's important to you?

REECE: Yeah, there's two different aspects to that. What I enjoy most is being able to mentor my students and be an impact on their lives. I teach such a wide range of students that several of them I, not several of them, but I get to really see them grow up. Which is crazy to say, you know, teaching at studio for three years. But I've also known the students for longer when I dance there as well. So, being able to see them grow up and know that I'm a mentor in their life or someone that they feel like that they can look up to is, it's really heartwarming to know that, that I can have an impact on them. A lot of them, I get to know them personally. They get to know me personally. And a lot of them have even asked me about advice about things in dance or things outside of dance, like with school. And it's really just an honor for them to see me that way. And I enjoy being a part of their lives. And then, the second half of that is, that dance teaches, I feel like it's important to because, that dance is important because it teaches so many soft skills that people don't normally think of. And I think that that's one of the things are people, like, `Dance in business? Like, how does that relate?’ But they actually overlap a lot more than it sounds like it would. Dance teaches a lot about discipline and hard work and perseverance. It's not easy. A lot of times you push through even when you're injured or when you're not feeling well. You always show up. It doesn't matter what's going on. You are there, you are working your hardest, and to come to class every single day for years and years and years is, it really takes a lot of discipline. There's also a lot of, like, rules that you have to follow, a lot of manners. It teaches a lot about manners. There's just a lot of soft skills that you learn that can easily transfer later on in life if you're going into the work field that are just, that are so valuable that you're learning, that you get to learn so early on. It also teaches you a lot of nonverbal communication skills because, I mean, it's your job to convey stories without language at all. So, I just feel like it's very, it's a very beneficial part of dance. But I also love it because I get to share the thing that I'm most passionate about.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

SCOTT: Man, Reece really has that hustle in her, doesn't she?

ALICIA: I know. That is a highly motivated woman. What a great role model for all those dancers who are learning from her. And what an awesome way to go see “The Nutcracker” right here on campus.

SCOTT: Yeah, my wife actually bought tickets to that a few weeks ago, so she's taking my daughter to see it next weekend. I’ll have to tell them about Reese's story so they can cheer for her.

ALICIA: Well, isn't that adorable? Man, Scootles. Big thanks to Chelsey for bringing us that interview. Be sure to check the show notes for a link to Chelsey’s full story about Reece. We'll also attach the link to tickets within the show notes if you want to come see “The Nutcracker” with Scott's family. Scootle, tell us about your next “Eagle Abroad” interview.

SCOTT: So, last spring, I spoke to Emily, an international studies major who called in while she was studying abroad in Japan. She told me about some of the lessons she learned from her trip, including what she learned about herself. W

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

SCOTT: Where are you from originally?

EMILY: I'm from, like, the D-FW suburbs.

SCOTT: OK. And have you ever traveled to traveled before this?

EMILY: No. This was actually my second time on a plane.

SCOTT: Oh, wow. Where was this plane trip to?

EMILY: I went to San Francisco before. It was pre-COVID, so …

SCOTT: Yeah. So, this is very different.

EMILY: Oh, yeah. A 14-hour flight.

SCOTT: Did you happen to get any, like, financial aid or assistance to pay for the trip?

EMILY: I got a scholarship through, like, the Study Abroad office, but that's all I received. It was pretty easy to actually get one. And through the program that I applied to, they had opportunities available as well. But, because my process was so rushed, I was able to apply for the external scholarships through CIEE. But most people that I know about that were in, like, my meeting with Glenn and everybody, they all received at least some financial aid from the school.

SCOTT: Nice. What made you want to study abroad? Obviously, being an international studies major, it makes sense. But was there anything in particular that, that made you want to study abroad?

EMILY: I am minoring in Japanese, so I really wanted to go there, especially because I have an interest in doing the JET Program after I graduate. So, I wanted to go to Japan and experience it to see if that's actually somewhere where I'd be OK living and getting around.

SCOTT: Nice, and the JET program, that's like an English-teaching program, is that right?

EMILY: Yes.

SCOTT: So, we talked about this a little bit. Next question is, where are you studying? You're in Kyoto, is that correct?

EMILY: Yes, I'm in Kyoto, like, right in the heart of the city.

SCOTT: And then, how long is the program and how long have you already been there?

EMILY: So, I arrived here. It's like a 12-week program, the one I'm doing, but it's like separated into six-week blocks through this particular school. And, I came in February, and I leave May 6th.

SCOTT: What are you studying? You mentioned that you're minoring in Japanese. Are you doing, like, foreign language courses there, or are you studying anything else?

EMILY: So, I do, like, the optional Japanese classes that they have every Tuesday and Thursday. They didn't actually have the equivalent course that I needed for my major, but I'm getting it worked out. But, I'm also taking like a manga history class and then Japanese feudal history right now. So those correspond well with both my major and my minor.

SCOTT: Very cool. What's the structure of the program like? Are you kind of, like, embedded with other students who are studying there full time, or are you with other students who are there for, like, your broad programs? And what's, like, your weekly classes?

EMILY: So, through CIEE, it's all pretty much kids that are coming for like one block at a time, since they do like the block program. So, it's more like trimester schedule, if that makes sense, six weeks at a time. And it's just a lot of kids coming from, like, ASU, Vanderbilt, other schools. But they do also have a partner school with Shiga University, which is in the prefecture next to Kyoto, where Lake Biwa is. So, that's, like, their partner university.

SCOTT: And how many courses did you say you're doing there?

EMILY: So, it's two per block, so I'm doing four in total. And then, plus the optional Japanese class.

SCOTT: OK. And then, what's the living? Are you living in like a dorm on a campus, on a university there, or some other kind of student housing or just an apartment? What's that like for you?

EMILY: So, I'm in the same building that the school is in, but they have another building as well, that's like a five-minute walk. So, like, I'm in the Shicata Building, but there's another one called Houses on. But it's really convenient. I just go down to the second floor and I'm in class.

SCOTT: Nice, easy. So, interantional studies and Japanese. Obviously, this all relates to your degree program pretty, pretty intrinsically. But how does it relate to what you want to do in the future? Like, what you want to do for your career after you graduate?

EMILY: So, I'm really interested in working in foreign relations-type things, at least I think so far. But I've also been on airplanes here a lot more because I recently just came back from Okinawa, doing a little day trip -- a weekend trip, sorry. And it was a lot of fun and it made me realize I wanted to work at an airline or something like that, because I know they need a lot of people who are bilingual and trilingual to help kind of listen to customer complaints and satisfaction issues and kind of work that out, and I think that'd be pretty interesting. But here it's, like, making me realize that maybe I wouldn't have to do something so corporate, which was kind of nice to realize.

SCOTT: Yeah, that's cool. What has been the biggest surprise about your experience so far?

EMILY: Honestly, I did not have that much culture shock coming here.

SCOTT: Really?

EMILY: Everyone's like, `Oh, my gosh, it's going to be so different.’ But I feel like living in North Texas area, like, there is already like a lot of like Japanese and other Asian food and influence in the area. So, it's not like I had anything, and I was like, `Oh, what is that? I have no clue.’ And maybe being in the Japanese program at UNT did help a little bit, since the professors are all really great and kind of prepared me for it. Bu,t a lot of, I will say the public transportation, that's fantastic. Whenever it is on time, it's rarely ever late. Of course, I happened to have that happened to me when I was trying to do the meeting the first time. But that was the biggest, like, culture shock, in my opinion, was the just easy access to public transportation and everything. And it's a big cash society here, which is really different. But it's pretty cool.

SCOTT: Like physical cash, like, they don't use, like, credit debit cards a lot?

EMILY: So, especially in Kyoto, since it's, like, the older city, like, if you're going into, like Gion or some of the other, like, districts of it, there's a lot of restaurants that are only cash. Like, you can't use your credit card or anything like that. There's also, like, prepaid transportation cards that you use. Like, I use the ICOCA Card, which is for Jerry West, like, you can use those at the convenience stores and everything. But, those small restaurants, they just take cash. It's pretty cool. So, you have to be careful to not spend it all on random stuff or else you'll have to go to the ATM.

SCOTT: Do you know, you might not, but do you happen to know like why that is? Why they so many businesses are cash only?

EMILY: I don't know why. I haven't experienced to as much as some other people because I go to the same restaurants, generally speaking. But, whenever we did a little school trip to Kobe, a lot of the places over there were cash only. And, I think maybe it's just because older generations want to feel like the tangible money, in a sense, because there's like a lot of discontent with the government right now, especially because the same political party has been there for 50 years. So, I think it's just, like, the security of knowing that you're holding the cash, I would assume at least.

SCOTT: Yeah. All right. You mentioned going to Kobe and Okinawa. Have you gotten to do a bunch of traveling there? Have you gone anywhere else in Japan?

EMILY: For sure. Travel here is super easy because we only have classes that are mandatory Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. So, we actually have Wednesdays and Fridays off. Well, I am in the SRC, which is, like the Student Resource Council. So, I do have to be present on Wednesdays most of the time to help run meetings and everything. But, yeah, it's really easy to just go around, especially because, like, the major cities like Osaka and Kobe, they're not that far. We also went to Himeji with the school to see the castle and everything, and Okinawa -- that was just like a fun little thing. It's only an hour and 45-minute flight. But I also went to Tokyo. A lot of people go to Hokkaido, which I might do at the end, take a little trip there. But, I know some people have even, like, depending on the program and your passport and everything, it might change, but people have even gone to like Korea and Thailand during our breaks in between blocks and it doesn't, like, affect anything if you have a U.S. passport with your 90-day visa for travel for Japan.

SCOTT: That’s cool. What has been the biggest challenge so far? Whether it was just, like, getting it all lined up ahead of time or the actual travel or anything you encountered once you actually got there. What's been the biggest challenge of this experience for you so far?

EMILY: The biggest challenge was definitely my first week here, getting to know, like, the transportation system, feeling comfortable speaking to people with my limited Japanese that I know, and the luggage. Carrying that around from the airport was atrocious. Had I known they had a, like, a luggage courier service, I would have used it, and I had less bags and some people. And there's a lot of stairs in this country and a lot of walking. But I do, there's, like, these little divider things that are in the road which are for, like, people who are visually impaired. It's like a great country for that. They have a lot of access for people who are blind. But when you're rolling around your luggage, it constantly would get stuck. So, whenever I was trying to get from the airport to where we were meeting for the school pick up, I got lost and it was horrible. But I overcame it, and I decided that I was going to help other people with the group pick up for Block Three. So, I went and did that so they didn't have my horrible experience having to get a 50-dollar taxi.

SCOTT: Very nice of you to pay it forward. What would you say has been the best part of the trip for you so far?

EMILY: Definitely just meeting a bunch of new people. Like, making international friends has been great. Having the ability to do some classwork asynchronously and actually get to fully be immersed in the country and its culture. Also, being here during Sakura season is incredible. The cherry blossom season, it's been incredible being here for that. We actually did a picnic with my class on the Kamo River, which is famous, and it's like one of the most like ancient places in Kyoto where people would, like, go since antiquity to drink and read books with their friends and listen to music. So, it was really cool to be able to experience that. And, like, seeing the ancient temples. Just the history here is beautiful.

SCOTT: Yeah, that's awesome. This might be kind of kind of redundant question, but how has this trip impacted you beyond the educational experience?

EMILY: I think I've come out of my shell a lot more. I think I've gotten a lot more comfortable, like, going out and doing things with people, like, with my friends and it's helped me actually create a lot of international relationships. I've met people from Korea, China, obviously Japan and, like, some people from Russia that are all coming here to travel and enjoy, and I was able to actually talk to them because I was like, `You know what? Nobody here is going to judge me. They're not going to know me for that long.’ And I think it'll be better when I come back talking to new people.

SCOTT: What advice would you have for any students who are interested in doing a study abroad, but they're not sure if they can pull it off or they’re not sure if it's worth it. What advice would you have for them?

EMILY: I would just say if you're thinking about it, do it. Like, all of the study abroad advisors, they are so great. Like, Glenn, bless his heart. He had to put up with me for so long. I did not have my stuff together, but I was still able to do it. Just talk to people. Talk to people who have done it. Talk to your advisors, both academic and the study abroad. And if you're taking a foreign language, talk to one of those professors because they really want to see us go there and experience that cultural immersion and everything. I would say, make sure you have your passport. Obviously, don't rush, like, try to rush it and get the paperwork done super-fast. That's what I did, and it was a mess. But, just do it. You're not going to be, you know, in your twenties in a foreign country again, you know, it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. And if you can get the means, like you can use your like grants and stuff that you get in the United States for study abroad. Like, they're available. So, if you receive any financial aid through FAFSA or anything like that, you can use it studying abroad and you get those college credits and they transfer over. So, my question is, why not?

SCOTT: Very good. Can you talk a little bit about, you know, you mentioned the process was a little bit rushed for you and you mentioned, Glenn, a couple of times. Can you talk about who Glenn is and how he kind of, whether it was him or the study abroad office or anybody else in particular that kind of helped you make this happen?

EMILY: So, Glenn is the study abroad advisor for East Asia, and I think it's South America as well. So, any of those countries he deals with. But I had to expedite my passport because I had never had one before. As I previously mentioned, I had never been out of the country. So, I was like, `I really want to go to Japan.’ One day in August, I was, like, I told my mom, `I like, I want to go. I'm going to go get my passport. I need to do it before I'm a senior.’ So, I contacted the study abroad office, like, I had looked at brochures and stuff before I had been to some of the fairs, and I've talked to people in my classes and my professors as well who had studied abroad and they all loved it. So, I went to these like intersessions and I talked about it, lots of meetings going back and forth with my counselors, figuring out how classes would work. And, honestly, the most confusing part is getting that paperwork done. Or, like, the classes that you're taking and what transfer credits they have. It was so confusing for all of us, so bad, but we got it done. That's the important thing.

SCOTT: All right, last question: Any other fun stories from your trip that you'd like to share?

EMILY: So, not necessarily school-related, but when I was in Okinawa last weekend, I somehow got on the military base and that was probably one of the funniest moments in my life because … I had a friend who is a marine and I was like, `Can you take me on the base?’ He was, like, `Sure. Just bring your passport,’ and I was like, `Oh, my gosh. Like, how much clearance am I going to have to get?’ So, like, they took my fingerprints, they, like, scanned my passport, asked me a bunch of questions, had me type in my Social Security number. It was this whole ordeal, and I did all of that just to get Takis because Red 40 is not a thing here, and it's something that we crave in America and I missed it very much. That and Costco. They have Costco’s here.

SCOTT: You went through all that just to get Takis at the military base? That's amazing.

EMILY: It was, yeah, it was a thing. And everybody was like, `What the heck?’ Because they do have hot chips here, but they're different because they are objectively probably better for you, but the spice is not the same. The Flamin’ Hot Cheetos, they're not good. I don't know. And, that's another thing: The level of spice in Japan, as a Texan, it is nothing. It's like for babies, honestly. So, it's like, whenever I go to, like, Japanese curry and I, like, order at the highest level, like a ten, they’re like, `Are you sure?’ And I'm like, `This is not spicy. Like, y'all need Cajun food. Like, you really do.’ But it's just all been really great here, and I think I'd love to do it again for sure.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

ALICIA: Honestly, I think “Emily in Japan” might be the “Emily in Paris” spinoff. I didn't know I needed. Love her dedication to getting some Takis. Priorities, you know?

SCOTT: Right. Who knew Hot Cheetos could be so hard to come by. Big thanks to Emily for sharing her story with us. And be sure to check the show notes to learn more about our Study Abroad program.

ALICIA: Scootle, it's time for our Q&A. What are we diving into today?

SCOTT: Well, sticking with our “Eagles Abroad” theme, if you could study abroad anywhere in the world, where would you go and what would you study there?

ALICIA: Well, if you're asking …

SCOTT: That’s the whole segment.

ALICIA: I would definitely study culinary arts or pastry in France. I want to be French- trained.

SCOTT: All right, that's fancy. I would, when I was in, like, late elementary school, I got really into Greek mythology. So, I think I would want to tap back into my inner child and go to Greece to study Greek mythology. That'd be sick.

ALICIA: Let's go.

SCOTT: Our intrepid student reporter, Anthony Simone, took today's question out to campus to see what some of our students think.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

ANTHONY: If you could go anywhere in the world to study abroad, where would you go and what you study?

STUDENT 1: That's a great question. I think it would have to be in between, probably somewhere in Europe, like, Germany, because I know their, at least their college-education system, it's very like public, so free, it’s for the public. Or, maybe somewhere in Asia and you'll see why. Because the major I'm studying is computer science and I would want to continue studying computer science, like game design, and places like Japan or Korea would be, like, top-tier to go study those.

STUDENT 2: I would probably want to go to Sweden because I went there on vacation for, like, a week. And, honestly, it was the best week of my life, but I would still probably want to study the same thing, which is behavioral analysis.

STUDENT 3: Probably Mexico. I really like the city and I've been there a few times. So, like the advertising there, like, how they do certain like ads, especially like with their brands, like, Bimbo and stuff like that. So, I think that's something I'd like to do and explore.

ANTHONY: So Mexico City, Mexico. For sure.

STUDENT 4: Germany. Normally I would study their techniques in their construction because I'm very fascinated with, you know, German culture. I'd love to go and spend time there. And I'm a construction major, so I'd want it to be something that's applicable to my major. You know, I mean, I know Germany, they're very good with environmental friendliness. They're very keen on that aspect. You know, being someone who is Gen Z, very environmentally conscious, right? What's the other thing? They're very, in terms of the resources they use, they tend to be very efficient. They're very good on being renewable, you know, using renewable types of construction techniques to make sure that their buildings are, you know, sustainable.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

ALICIA: All right. Well, big thanks to Anthony for bringing those to us. Now that you've heard from us and some students, we want to hear all about your dream study abroad destination. So, email us at podcast@UNT.edu or call us at 940-565-4341.

SCOTT: And don't forget 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.

[OUTRO MUSIC]

SCOTT: “Happy Friday, North Texas” is a production of the University of North Texas. The Today Show was produced Scott Brown with editing by Scott Brown and Anthony Simon and original reporting by Scott Brown, Chelsey Gilbert and Anthony Simone. For more information, visit UNT.edu/podcast.

SCOTT: (Laughing). You can hear the bubbles so clearly. Bloop, bloop, bloop.

ALICIA: That’s how you should start the …

SCOTT: Today is Friday, December 6th and we’ve got a great shore … Right outta the gate.

ALICIA: That’s right, today we’re going to hear about a cool new program brewing over … brewing

SCOTT: Let’s try that last sentence.

ALICIA: What is my freaking deal? … I wanted to say, `She’s got that dog in her.’

SCOTT: I almost put that. That won’t make it through editing.

ALICIA: What kind of outlandish stuff are they gonna say today? She had dog in her. … Well, isn’t that adorable?   
SCOTT: That was so aggressive.

ALICIA: Keep that in there, please. Keep that.

SCOTT: Keep what? We’ve gone so far off the rails.

ALICIA: We’ll also attach the link within the show notes if you wanna come see The Nutcracker with Scott’s family. … I was trying not to laugh, but I can’t help it. … OK, I’m done, I’m done, I’m done, I’m done. … It’s not that funny. It’s not, but it is.

SCOTT: Got the gigs. Would it help if I turned around?

ALICIA: No, it’s not you, it’s the text. It’s the text. … We need like a theme song to help round that out.

SCOTT: We have a theme song.