**HFNT #9: UNT 101**

**Episode Transcript**

[INTRO MUSIC]

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

Alicia: And, I'm Alicia.

Scott: Today is Friday, September 27th, and we've got a good one for you today, folks.

Alicia: Yes, we do. We've got an interview about an innovative approach to addressing learning loss from the pandemic. We have a roundtable discussion with some of our Eagle ambassadors about some of their favorite things about UNT in Denton. And, we've got the next installment of our Democracy Primer series, Scotty.

Scott: But, before we get to all that, you know what we have to do first.

Alicia: We’ve got to catch up. What's new, Scotty?

Scott: You know, just enjoying this fall weather. Excited about that big, mean green win over Wyoming at DATCU last weekend and getting excited for the fall. Set up all the Halloween decorations recently and we got the kids’ costumes picked out, so we're ready to go.

Alicia: Nice. Are you dressing up or just the kiddos?

Scott: Uh, we've done a few family costumes over the years, but this year the kids pick two totally unrelated characters, so I don't think I'm going to get costume this year. What about you?

Alicia: Oh, you know, this and that. I'm currently in my watching professional football era, so I've been really locked into Monday and Thursday night football as well as watching the big games on Sunday. You could say I'm a football girlie for the time being. Also, this year, my goal for the season is to only watch scary movies that I have not seen before, to catch up on some of the stuff I've been putting to the side. I'm a simple girl with simple things to bring me joy, Scotty. But, you know what can be even scarier than no football and rewatching movies, I've already seen?

Scott: What?

Alicia: Math.

[TRANSITION EFFECTS]

ALICIA: Learning loss during the pandemic was no joke. And now, a lot of students are entering college with some catching up to do.

SCOTT: That's right, and UNT is taking an innovative approach to helping students who did not pass the math portion of the Texas Success Initiative get back on track. Dubbed the TSI five, these lectures out of the Teach North Texas lab are getting students on their feet to get them more engaged and more confident when it comes to math. Our very own Amanda Lyons spoke to Anthony Hufford, a master teacher for Teach North Texas, who taught the classes last year to learn what makes these classes so different.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Amanda: Tell me a little bit more about the role that you're in and just what you do on a day- to-day.

Anthony: OK. I am one of a team of five and I currently, I currently have two sections of 340 350 that I teach. But, we co-plan together, so we plan kind of the daily lessons, the activities, assessments. We create, we create together any assessment review activities, formative assessment-type of things. We kind of bounce ideas off each other, or if I make something I'll like here, share with the group, like, `Here's what I'm using in my class. Feel free to take it, or change it, or whatever,’ and we kind of all do that. We also regularly discuss together kind of how classes went, which is, I think, my favorite part of being on the team. So, like, will come back in from class and we'll be like, `That did not go the way that we had planned it. Here's what, here's what I did, here's what how the students were reacting to that.’ And then we kind of just really organically just kind of bounce ideas off each other, brainstorm. Maybe if I come in and I and, I share that my students have a hard time with the topic, somebody else on the team might share what they did and the success that they had and like, `OK, so that's what I'm going to go in next time and take that with me and try that out and see how it goes.’ So, the day-to-day is really, it's, it's kind of planning and then teaching, but a lot of it's just those organic conversations with teammates on how classes are going and ways to improve our own individual classes.

Amanda: OK. Because it sounds like it's a lot of, like you're working together. So, the courses may be different, but they're still structured the same way, so everyone's kind of learning at that same level throughout the semester.

Anthony: Yes, because they're all ,they're all mostly on the same calendar. They might be one or two, like it might be a day ahead or behind, depending on the flow of the students. But, yes.

Amanda: They're being taught equally, essentially.

Anthony: Yes, they are.

Amanda: OK. And so, then, before this kind of started, did UNT reach out to you and then just what were your thoughts when they first told you about it?

Anthony: Yes, UNT did reach out and my thoughts were, it was a mixture of curiosity and interest, but also like tinged with I'm not quite sure, but that wasn't because the job didn't sound intriguing. It was because I loved where I was at. So, I heard about the opportunity. I got whatever information I could, and I remember thinking that this was an interesting opportunity to be a part of a program that could really help make a difference and change in student success. And, that was what was kind of alluring to me being able to be a part of that kind of not necessarily a new program, but kind of trying something new within a program. And so, ultimately that won out, my desire to try that something new kind of won out over my desire to stay where I was.

Amanda: So, are the classes the way you're teaching the youth now, are they, like, completely different than what you were doing beforehand, or is it similar?

Anthony: No, it's actually very similar in the way that I was structuring the day-to-day lessons. Before my curriculum was more problem-based, so it was more focused on here's this problem, let's tackle it, over a week or two. I taught Algebra 2, but the day-to-day learning of, like, a skill to then apply to that problem, we're doing it almost identical to the way that we're teaching these classes and overarching structure.

Amanda: So, you were coming in kind of, like, `OK, I know what we're doing,’ because you've already been doing that.

Anthony: I came in knowing very much knowing that I wanted to do what we're doing now.

Amanda: Well, then it worked out, right?

Anthony: It did.

Amanda: Can you go just a little bit more into detail of, like, what is happening in classes like with this program now?

Anthony: The big thing you'll see when you come into class is within the first 5 minutes or so, students are up, they’re at whiteboards around the room, and they are doing math and talking with each other. And, there's a specific structure that we have that that we use to facilitate that, to make it effective. But, at its core, it's getting the students to do math and realize that they can do math with our support. Like, I'm walking around, I'm constantly helping, providing next problems, giving them tips if they get stuck. But they're doing and that's how they're learning. And then, afterwards, they go back and they sit down, they write notes. They write down the things that they want to make sure that they remember from their time at the whiteboard, which is a little bit of a flip then where the teacher might be doing a lot of the doing and the students are trying to follow along. It's a little bit of a flip on that, which is … Actually, it's a lot of bits of a slip on that

Amanda: It’s a 180.

Anthony: It's a 180, which I have, from anecdotally and from what students have written on reflections, has been successful in helping them feel more confident and feel like they can do math, which I think is really important because as they go into their college-level math class, they need to be able to feel like they can be successful because if they feel like they're not going to be able to be successful, it's probably going to be true. It's going to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Amanda: Right. So, it's also, they're learning how to do the math, but they're also just building their confidence with math.

Anthony: Yes. Yes.

Amanda: OK. Very cool. Have they kind of come up to you and just, like, at the end of the semester, just like, `That was so great, like, that helped me.’ Like, are they giving you that feedback?

Anthony: For the most part, yes. We ask, we have them do reflections after each exam to kind of reflect on how they prepared for the exam, and on the first one we ask them if there's anything they could change about the course, what would they change? And then, there's also the spot-evaluation questions. And, in both of those places, a good number of the students -- maybe most, I’m not sure, I just don’t want to say most if I don’t have the actual numbers – a lot of them say things along the lines of actually doing the math or working with group members was really helpful for both learning and confidence-building.

Amanda: And they're in groups of three, correct?

Anthony: 2 to 3, yes.

Amanda: OK, like, they don't go above three. That's, like, the maximum number in a group?

Anthony: Yes. Yes. They do have to pass the marker between problems. I encourage them, I always say, `Share a marker, share a brain.’ So, just because one person has the marker doesn't mean that they're the ones doing the math. Like, all three should be watching, asking questions, saying, `Hey, where did you get that? I'm not sure what the next step is. I don't know that that's true.’ Things like that.

Amanda: And do you also have them kind of visualize it?

Anthony: Yes. So, early on, that was definitely, we have some visualization of that kind of arithmetic things on those lines. Now, we're moving at, at this point in time, we're moving into graphing. So, when they tell me, like, `If X is seven, then Y is five.’ I'm like, `OK, can you show me how you know that that's true?’ And they might choose to show me using algebra, or they might choose to show me on a graph how they know that that's true. But I do always back it up with like a, `Well, how do you know?’ and kind of let them choose to show me how they know that that's true.

Amanda: OK, so you just have them visualize it some way. And, I guess, the goal is that it reinforces kind of how they got there and how they can use that work for future problems?

Anthony: Yes. And it's helpful for me to see what their thinking was so I can gauge their level of understanding. It also gives me insight into if they're thinking ahead. Because today, for example, we weren't quite looking at the topic of slope just yet with graphing, but I had a couple of groups that were already using that topic to help them with what we were doing today, and that, was had I not have forced them to do that extra representation or discuss with me about it, I wouldn't necessarily have known that and now that I know that, I'm better prepared for that class going into the next class session, because I already know that there's some people in the room that have some idea of what's going on there.

Amanda: Right. Like, they kind of know about slopes, so you can tailor, do you tailor the problems to like each group individually or kind of to the whole class?

Anthony: The, it's one set flow of problems, but how they move through that flow is tailored by group. So, one group might, they might do like two of them and they're getting it super quick, so then I'm going to skip them ahead a little bit. I'm going to move them on to one that's a little bit more challenging because the flow starts, it starts with a basic form of the skill that every person in the room should be able to attain and then it gets steadily more difficult to the level that we need them to be able to do on their own. So, if a group is getting it, I might move them through a little bit more quickly. I might skip a few intentionally picking the ones that have elements that I need them to be able to do. If it's a group that is maybe struggling a little bit, I won't probably skip them, but I'll hang around those groups and be ask some more intentional questions to get them thinking in the right direction. Or I might say, `Hey, can I give you a hint here?’ or `Hey, can I offer a suggestion?’ And then, I'll give them that little bit of, a little bit of hint and tip to help them forward.

Amanda: OK. So, you have that flow kind of the plan, but then you'll tailored to each group's needs throughout the class.

Anthony: Yes. And then, if there happens to be a group that, like, every now and then I'll make up one on the on the fly. Like if I see a need, I might make one up in the middle of, the middle of the flow to address maybe a certain misconception that a group has or, more often, is if as a group happens to get through the whole solo, I'll come up with like an extension problem or a challenging problem that I don't already have one ready to go.

Amanda: OK, so a little bit of on the fly, but overall, there's that plan that you can use as well.

Anthony: Yes, there is definitely a plan of how we're going to … There's a little sample script of how we're going to start the lesson to get everyone's attention and kind of get them thinking in the right direction. There's the flow that we follow, and then we have some, some scripted things to wrap up the discussion with to make sure that we're all talking about the right things or we're not forgetting something, leaving something out. Because when you're not, when, as a teacher, if you're not up there lecturing the whole time, it's easy for something maybe to not have organically arisen in any of the groups, and you want to make sure you don't forget to talk about that thing.

Amanda: Yeah. So, there's just a little check at the end.

Anthony: Yes.

Amanda: OK. And I think I kind of, like, skipped over a bit, but since this is just so different, what was it like on, like, that first day when you all first started were like, `OK, here's what we're going to do.’ Like, how was that reception?

Anthony: Well, it was a little it was doubly different for me because, again, I've been in high school for 10 years. So, coming into a college setting where it wasn't my classroom, these are adults. I walked into the room not long before they walked into the room. That was a little bit of a, like, a culture shock, but we quickly got over it because after we went through a little bit of the syllabus and stuff, I had them up and around the room and I had them, Day One, we weren't doing, we weren't diving straight into content, but we were doing, you could think of it along the lines of like maybe a math-based riddle that has them thinking towards the topics we were going to be looking at to start the year, but not quite on the surface,`This is a math lesson.’ It was a task designed to get them used to the structure that we're going to be working in groups of 2 to 3, they're going to be random groups. You're going to be standing, you're going to be around the room working on the whiteboard. everyone's expected to have the marker. And, since it, since that was the goal to get them used to that, we didn't want there also to be the stress of it being heavily mask burdened. So, it was more like I said that more along the lines of a riddle that they could have signed with.

Amanda: So, you let them, like, get acclimated to this new idea of, `You will be standing the whole time, you have to talk. I'm not going to be at a whiteboard and just speak to you the whole time.’

Anthony: And it takes a lot of, as, as you go on to the semester, there's a lot of verbal reminding that we dot or that I do in the class. So, like, `Remember, guys, we're sharing the marker. Remember, please don't, please don't sit down. Stand up the whole time. It's good for your brain.’ And we do. We tell them why we're having them do the things that we're having them do, and we give them the, the reasons of like, `Standing is good for your blood flow. It's good for your brain. Research shows that you do think better when you are standing.’ And then, as the semester goes on, we have to do that less because they get used to it. It gets a little bit more comfortable where they're used to getting up and being in the groups and things, things like that.

Amanda: Like, it becomes second nature over time for them to just be up and about. Was the reception at the start, like was it pretty good? Was it, like, `Yeah, this is really cool.’ Or were there like a couple were, like, `I don't want to stand.’

Anthony: I think at the beginning, it's mostly neutral or it was mostly neutral with a few grumbler per class, like, `I don't want to stand.’ Or, `Oh, my ankle hurts.’ I'm, like, `Does it actually? Do you have a doctor's note? Just joking, but like, does it actually?’ And then, but, by the first test, by the first exam, four weeks in maybe, the vast majority are like, `OK, yeah, this is, I enjoy doing this. I enjoy getting up and doing the work.’ Still have some students that that don't really like it all that much in the moment, but I think even those students who are tired, you'll ask them, like, like, `Do you not like standing?’ Like, `Oh, well, no, I'm just tired. Like, I went to bed at 5 a.m.’ Like, `OK, well, well, that's, like…’

Amanda: That might be the problem.

Anthony: That might be the problem.

Amanda: So, yeah, back with the students. I guess, like what was that level that you were seeing that they were at just on average? And, were there things that kind of like gave everyone issues or is everyone just kind of different on where they were?

Anthony: I don't have, like, quantitative data to back this statement up, but from my observation and from talking with the students as a walk, as I'm working with them and working with each individual group, they seem to have different little pockets that they are missing. So, they, they all have various experiences in high school or middle school, way back to middle school even, with mathematics, like some of them will say that they've always struggled with math. Some of them, surprisingly, would say, `I've always really enjoyed math and felt like I was good at it and I'm not sure how I got into this class.’ But what they have in common is, they have little pockets where something didn't quite click in in their learning of it before, or it hasn't clicked up until now and that that specific thing is holding up a lot of other things. And it might, for example, it might be integer math, like, adding and subtracting positive and negative numbers. If they struggle with that, they're going to struggle with a lot of other concepts unless they have a calculator to lean on and for their placement test and for this class majority, they don't get to use that calculator. So, they're having to rely on their own abilities. It is common for a lot of these students to have memorized rules and they're coming to class knowing rules, like, they'll start off, `That's Y equals an X plus B, or that's keep change flip.’ They'll just name those, they'll say a rule, but then they struggle to know when and where that rule applies and how to use it, which, which I believe is, is a common struggle with students who do struggle with math. They have rules that they've memorized in their head. They did the work of memorizing this rule once upon a time, but they never quite understood the where and the why. So then, years later, when they're having to pull it back out, they remember the phrase A squared plus B squared equals C squared, but they have no clue what it has anything to do.

Amanda: They don't remember how to use it, They just know it.

Anthony: Yes.

Amanda: OK.

Anthony: And so, then a lot of our job has been not having them unlearn those rules, but kind of showing them that they don't necessarily need to memorize the rule. It's more important to understand the concepts of what's happening. And then, we lean on that more often. So, I don't use I don't force a student to use a specific rule. Like I mentioned earlier, when you asked about them visualizing a concept, I don't say,`Show me it this way.’ I'll say, `Can you show me how?’ And then, one group might use the rule correctly that they that they were able to remember, but another group might not use the rule at all and just follow a different chain of logic that, that got them to the correct answer because they were following the understanding of the topic.

Amanda: Right. It may not be the rule, but they still understood that concept that you're saying. So, they get to where they need to go.

Anthony: Yes.

Amanda: OK. And then, so how was that development over the semester? Did everyone kind of do well overall near the end? Are you seeing improvements with the students compared to when they first come in?

Anthony: Definitely that, yes. So, by and by large, the students who were unsuccessful in my classes last semester were students that really struggled with attendance and completing homework assignments, complete individual practice. I think I only had a few students who struggled at the end of the semester and had been there the whole journey. It did happen, and those students, but, but those students were, definitely still had improved a lot from the beginning of the semester. And, so then, it was more of a conversation with them of like, `Hey, let's try again next semester. It's OK. We're good. Like, you're doing way better now than you were. You, you, you understand a lot more now than you understood five months ago or four months ago,’ whatever it is.

Amanda: Yeah, however long the semester is.

Anthony: Yeah, so I think, so, by and large, the students definitely had an improvement in their conceptual understanding of what was really happening with the different math topics.

Amanda: OK, well, that's great. I'm glad to hear that they're all improving. And then, are there any things that maybe like, like, good moments that you're, like, ‘I really liked how they students did this.’ Or, maybe there's just some moments that stood out to you that you're like, `Yeah, I'm glad I'm here. Like, I'm glad I got to see this happen.’

Anthony: My, I think one of my favorite things is when a group of students comes up with a way to solve a problem that I did not expect at all, that was completely logical and well within the realm of things that they're allowed to do, but wasn't necessarily, like I mentioned earlier, following a rule or following a predefined strategy. So, for example, earlier today, a student needed to divide by a fraction, didn't know how to do that or didn't remember how to do that. So, instead did a little visualization of how many pieces of this fraction are needed to get to this bigger number that they were dividing. And then, that's how they got their answer. And so, I enjoy seeing things like that where students get creative with what they know and understand to solve problems that maybe they don't quite have a full understanding of just yet.

Amanda: OK. So, that ingenuity and creativity that you'll see from the students.

Anthony: Yeah, I love that, especially because these earlier math topics, that creativity is not always celebrated. And so, I enjoy in this opportunity where the students have those creative moments and we’re able to celebrate with them like, `Hey, you did this. Like, you didn't know how to do this thing over here, but you found a way to get to the answer through the steps that you knew,’ which, at the end of the day, I think is important. That's that confidence and that's that grit to figure out these difficult problems. Because as they move up in their math courses, depending on how far they have to go or irrelevant, relevant, irrelevant of how far they have to go, they're going to come across problems that they don't know how to do. So, having the creativity and drive to use what they do know to at least take a good, good, solid effort at it is important.

Amanda: Yeah, they have that confidence, like you said, and they know they can fall back on what they learned in this class and maybe they don't have the rule, quote-unquote, right, but they know that they can figure it out with those steps they learned.

Anthony: Exactly.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: My gosh, that math class almost sounds like fun.

Anthony: I know. I love what they're doing to make it more engaging and interactive. Big thanks to Amanda for bringing us that interview. And be sure to check the show notes for a link to her story for more information.

Alicia: OK, up next: We loved the student roundtable with members of the Green Brigade last episode so much that we decided to do another one -- this time with our Eagle Ambassadors.

Scott: Two episodes in a row. So, back when I first started working here, I started writing this series called “UNT 101,” where I would just email a survey to the Eagle Ambassadors to get their opinions on the best places to study on campus, the best coffee shops in Denton, and their favorite pieces of UNT trivia and history.

Alicia: And, for those who don't know, our Eagle Ambassadors are a diverse group of outstanding students who serve as tour guides out of our Welcome Center. So, they're chock full of UNT facts and Mean Green spirit.

Scott: That's right. So, every year I'd get all of this info from the ambassadors and put together listicle-style articles with the goal of helping new students get more familiar with campus and the wider Denton area. Now that we've got ourselves this little podcast, we thought we try mixing up the format.

Alicia: So, Eagle Ambassadors Delaney, Sangy and Harshal joined us in the studio to give us the inside scoop on how they're living their best lives at UNT.

Delaney: My name is Delaney. I am a history and political science major and I'm also a senior.

Sangy: Hi, my name is Sangy. My major is computer science and I am a sophomore.

Harshal: Hi, my name is Harshall. I'm currently a junior here at UNT, majoring in computer science and a minor in cybersecurity and mathematics. Really, the tech guy. And, yeah, it's been three years since I'm here at UNT.

Alicia: Awesome. Today, our focus will be on our “UNT 101” series where we ask our Eagle Ambassadors some questions about their favorite spots in Denton and on campus, and much more, encouraging students to explore these recommendations. So, let's get started.

Scott: All right. So, we're going to start with ways to get involved on campus. So, with the many resources, programs and student orgs we have at UNT, what are some of your favorite ways to get involved on campus?

Delaney: Personally, I took a lot of advantage of the on-campus housing and the resources that. Your R.A. will set up weekly meetings or monthly meetings, depending on where you are in your semester. Also, there are dorm-exclusive events that you can host. My dorm did a Halloween event, which was really fun. They also did a first week of school event. Stuff like that really helped me meet my friends on campus.

Scott: Nice.

Sangey: So, I would say get involved in, like, the organizations, you know, you can become members of it. Or, you can also attend the First Flight Week. There's, like, a lot going on during the First Flight Week.

Scott: Nice.

Alicia: Definitely.

Harshal: I would say the best advice would I would give to the students if they wanted to get involved on campus, because I was an orientation leader last year. So, I was responsible for the students to tell the resources how you can get involved. So, the first one is, I would say, there's a website which is called orgsync. You can search on the organization. Let's say, I'm a skinny guy. I love to climb. So, if you can, you know, you love climbing and stuff, you can search and join the climbing club. And, I would say find your passion as a student. We're all passionate about something. I'm really passionate about my field, tech field. So, I'm a part of, like, educational organization on campus as well. So I would say, just find your passion, which organization you're interested in joining it, make new friends and try to get involved on campus as much as you can. And that's the best advice I would give to the students.

Alicia: The next question I have is about your favorite UNT trivia or history. UNT was established in 1890 and has 134 years of history, trivia and general quirkiness to draw from. What are some of your favorite UNT trivia or history?

Delaney: Yeah, a fun fact that I learned recently is that we actually got to vote on our mascot, Scrappy. Some of the run ups, instead of being an eagle, were a dragon. So, we could have been the UNT Dragons.

Alicia: That's funny.

Sangey: So, I, my favorite history is the homecoming bonfire. Like, there are fireworks, there are people. There's one fire. I love it all.

Scott: Yeah, it's a super fun tradition.

Harshal: Well, I would say my favorite UNT history tradition would be the Eagle Claw and Caw and alma mater song. So, I used to sing a lot of the time when I was in the orientation, and we also used the Eagle Claw and Caw throughout our tours. So, we are standing in front of the Hurley Administration Building, we are teaching how to do an Eagle Claw, so I think it's one of the most memorable UNT history, which I really like doing it, and the guests are having a great time with doing Eagle Caw, So, it's pretty fun.

Scott: You’ve got to give us a caw now.

Harshal: I can do, I can do an eagle caw, so I'll be as loud as possible.

Alicia: Go for it.

Harshall: Caw!

Alicia: Yeah! That's awesome.

Scott: Nice.

Scott: All right, next up, we got coffee. For college students, coffee is very important. From time to time, you need that caffeine boost to get through those long days of studying or just need an afternoon treat. Which Denton coffee shops would you recommend to your fellow peers?

Delaney: Yeah. Personally, I'm a huge fan of West Oak. It's just on the square. But the best part about West Oak is their Voltage coffee, which we serve on campus. So, when I'm too lazy to go walk or drive over to the square, I just go to the one right by my job and right by my classes and get that good Voltage coffee straight from UNT.

Sangey: Yeah, my favorite is West Oak Coffee Bar, too, in Denton Square. I love their coffee.

Harshal: Well, I would say, to be honest, I'm not a coffee person. I really like tea and I enjoy drinking tea every single day, whenever I think of. But I would say, I have heard great things about Froth Coffee Bar and West Oak Coffee Bar as well. So, I would say that could be my recommendation if you are looking forward to visit one of the top coffee spots.

Scott: Anywhere you go to get tea?

Harshal: Tea? I would say I like to make my own tea at my apartment, so I would say so, self-caring is the most. Whenever you cook your home-cooked meal that tastes a lot better than going outside eating. So, I'm would say I like to, you know, make my own tea, so I love that.

Delaney: Yeah, I've even had a chance or I, which is also just off campus, does a great chai.

Harshal: Really? Yeah, I would definitely, you know …

Delaney: I recommend. We can go together.

Alicia: There's another spot. I can't think of it. It's also on the square. It's next to West Oak.

Delaney: Yes. It's red in color.

Alicia: Yes. That has a great dirty chai.

Delaney: Yes. They also -- not that, if we can't remember the name, it’s not important -- but they do a chocolate-dipped strawberry mocha. Yeah, it's very gourmet. We were just talking about this, too. What is it called?

Sanjay: Jupiter?

Harshal: It was, Jupiter.

Alicia: Yeah, there you go.

Delaney: Jupiter House. Great smoothies, great coffee. And that strawberry-dipped chocolate mocha. Amazing.

Harshal: But, I would say, we have two Starbucks on campus. One is outside, which is kind of, like, right next to the Hurley Administration Building. One is inside the University Union. My favorite drink is mocha cookie crumble. So, if you are looking forward to try a new drink at Starbucks, definitely, I would say you can try that.

Scott: Nice.

Alicia: Good recommendations. All right, next up, we're going to talk about music venues. So, Denton seems to be the hub of some live music. Whether you want to go to a concert, an intimate show or a street performance, there are plenty of places to take in some tunes. In your own humble opinion, what are some of the best music venues in Denton?

Delaney: I'm very opinionated about this. Every fall, we do a jazz festival. If you haven't visited, I do recommend it, and it takes place in Denton’s Quakertown Park. They put up multiple stages, both for local bands and for UNT bands. I went last year with my friends and we were there the whole night. It was a great time. It's also the perfect time of year, usually October-ish, where it's nice and not too chilly to be outside. They have great food, great music, all the good stuff for a good night with friends.

Scott: That’s good.

Sangey: My favorite is The Syndicate. They have, like, beautiful music playing in there. It's, like, good background music. It doesn't disturb you even while you're studying, at least for me.

Alicia: Yeah, definitely. I could agree.

Harshal: Well, I would say the best music venues. I have not been to actually, like, different spots on Denton yet, spots, you know, spots like, wonderful music. But I've seen a lot of events in Denton Square. They have a lot of community fairs as well. But, I would say, if you want to listen to really good music, I really like attending the tailgate and the marching band, how they perform those, you know, all that kind of stuff and one of my coworker, he was a part of the UNT Mean Green Brigade and he was the one who was doing this, I believe. What do you call that, Delaney?

Delaney: Conducting.

Harshal: Conducting, exactly. So, I would say I really love watching our band performs that music before the football game starts. And I think it's one of the most different feeling you can get before the football game.

Delaney: So, yeah, and on that note, another fun fact about UNT, our 1 O’Clock Jazz Band is the only collegiate band to ever receive Grammy nominations. So, not only is it really convenient, but it's really quality.

Harshal: And, I guess they have been nominated seven times.

Delaney: I believe seven, yeah. Maybe the eighth time, we'll finally get that Grammy and we'll put it in The Syndicate.

Scott: All right, so now we're going into food.

Alicia: My favorite.

Scott: Denton is becoming Foodie Central with its variety of eclectic and well-rounded dining options, reflective of its quirky personality. What are some of your favorite places to eat off campus?

Delaney: Yes, speaking of a quirky personality, Graffiti Pasta is one of my favorite places to visit. It’s is on the square. And, graffiti is not just a name, it's also the setting. So, they have local Denton artists completely slathered across the walls, on the tables, on the chairs. Also, I do have some dietary issues, so going there, they always are really good at accommodating that, and they have a music venue downstairs as well.

Sangey: My favorite has to be Crooked Crust pizza and for Mexican food, I love Rusty Taco. It's in the Denton square.

Scott: It’s so good. I love Rusty Taco.

Alicia: A solid choice.

Harshal: Well, for me, I would say I'm a huge fan of sandwiches and I love subs. So, there's a place by Eagle Drive which is called New York SubHub, which is a really fantastic place. It is, I would say, one of my top spots/ You know, if I feel hungry after my classes, I will definitely go by Eagle Drive, grab my sub, go back to my classes again.

Alicia: OK, onto the next question, still on food. Between our dining halls and retail options, there's no shortage of choices when it comes to grabbing a bite to eat on campus. We literally have an all-vegan dining hall. What are some of your favorite places to eat on campus?

Delaney: Yeah, I really like Bruce Hall. What's unique about Bruce Hall is they have a different menu every day. Now, they are known for the 300 pounds of mac and cheese that they make no matter what. But, for the weekly menu, on Thursdays, they do chicken katsu, which is like a fried Korean chicken. It's so good. I literally gorge myself on it every Thursday. I do recommend.

Sangey: My favorite food on campus has to be Eagle Landing. I mean, they don't have the full menu every day or anything, but I love their food so much.

Scott: Yeah, it's a good, like, food-court style. You can get whatever you want. I like that.

Harshal: But, I'll tell you, if you were to ask me this question during midnight, I would definitely say Eagle Landing without any doubt, because it has seven different restaurants and I really like their Asian fried rice. And, the second thing which I really like, is about the burger, the option they have, the falafel, they have chicken and all that kind of stuff. So, I would say if you are looking forward to, you know, try a variety of stuff in your diet, Eagle Landing is definitely the place. And, you can actually tell your mom, `Hey, Mom, I just gained 10 pounds this weekend by eating at Eagle Landing.’ They have really good desserts and stuff, and if you're a really good fan of brownies, absolutely you’ve got to try Clark Bakery, which is right next to the Cibo Fresco. I love that place.

Alicia: I'm learning so much. And now, I need to go. I need to go again. I was literally there the last year they started Eagle Landing.

Delaney: Yeah, I was there too.

Alicia: My senior year, they opened it officially and I was like, `Dang it, now I'm leaving.’

Scott: And now, you work here.

Alicia: I know, I work here now, so I can still go.

Harshal: I would say, since last year, they might have added a lot of options since then, so you should definitely try that out.

Alicia: I will. And. the chicken katsu. So, thank you.

Scott: Field trip. We’re doing a field trip.

Delaney: That's why we're rated the best for food in college in Texas. So good.

Scott: All right. You mentioned studying in The Syndicate. What are some of the best places to study on campus and get a little peace and quiet?

Sangey: It could be Willis Library basement floor. I mean, that's like the quietest part. I was talking to my friend. Like, we were literally whispering once and someone came up to us and told us that just be quiet. I'm like, `We’re whispering. How quiet you can we be?’

Delaney: Yeah, I see people majoring in shushing sometimes, so I prefer the second floor of wireless because it's more collaboration-based. And they also have rooms to reserve up there. But when I’m not in Willis, I’m definitely in the BLB. They're more open-concept and, it's like a nice fall day, they have a rooftop lounge that you can go study on. So, I’m big on thatt for sure.

Harshal: I would say for me, best place to study on campus is, when I went to my chemistry class for the first semester, this building is called Environmental Science Building, and will just go in there. There's not too many students in there. There are study tables where you can sit, you can charge your phone, charge your laptop and study there. So, it's very peaceful down there as well. And, there's, like, a bunch of plants around in that building, so it feels like you're sitting right next to nature. And there's a pond outside of the Environmental Science Building. So, let's say you get stressed out, burned out and you're studying for, like, four hours consecutively. And you want to chill with your with your best friends, turtles and toads, you can absolutely grab some strawberries for them. I really think they love strawberries, because last time I went there, I had the whole box of strawberries and I shared it with the turtles. So, they're really like that.

Alicia: All right. Some UNT bucket-list experiences. Every college has its own traditions and experiences that make it unique. Is there something every UNT student should experience at least once?

Delaney: Oh, definitely the ring ceremony. You all have to graduate, so you all got to go to the ring ceremony. The only thing about ring ceremony, I’ve watched plenty and sometimes the seniors get really excited and it becomes a splash zone. So, that's probably the favorite part about the ring ceremony is that it's so interactive.

Sangey: Yeah, for me, the bucket list has to be the homecoming week. There's, like, football. There's obviously the bonfire, my favorite tradition. Yeah, and a lot of other events as well.

Harshal: I would say I definitely agree with what Sangey just mentioned. It is happening every single year. So, I would say, you have four years to graduate at UNT, so you should at least once in your college journey. So, I would say Homecoming Bonfire is my favorite tradition.

Scott: Bonfire is pretty epic. All right, we are down to the last question. Denton is known for its vibrant community, love of music and commitment to small-town culture. As our students spend the next few years here, they'll slowly start to discover new things about the city. What are some of Denton's must-sees that might not have been on their radar before?

Delaney: I really, really think music is everywhere here at UNT. People think they're just going to be in The Syndicate or in a music venue, but it's all over campus. They're going to those little pop ups that you might see in Bruce or around there. That's a really big thing for me. Also, the culture of, like, reusing things here at Denton is really strong. So, we have shops all around that are both thrift, and not just with clothes. There is a shop called Thistle, which is thrift art supplies and school supplies. That's something I really learned about being Mean Green in more than one way.

Sangey: So, I love the thrift stores in Denton. There are like so many uncountable thrift stores and I'm a big shopper. So, for me, that's like heaven.

Harshal: I would say that Denton Square is one of the top spot for the students to, you know, hang out once they're done with the classes and maybe during weekends. I would say, you have to visit Denton Square at least, like, maybe once a month or something, if you want to hang out with your friend. They have really good, authentic Mexican restaurants, different type of Indian restaurants as well. And I believe they have different hair, I would say barbers and stuff, where you can get your hair cut. So, I think, pretty much you can get everything in Denton Square. And, last but not the least, I really like Beth Marie’s. The ice cream is so good. And my favorite one is cookies and cream. So, I go there every single weekend with my friends at Denton Square. So, I'll tell you have to visit there. And during Halloween, I believe, they have, like, different events and stuff. So, you can walk around, maybe find some new friends and have a photo,shoot right there because they have different lightings on the Halloween day. So I love that place.

Scott: I'm going to sneak in a surprise question that we used to ask: Best place to nap on campus?

Sangey: I usually nap on the fourth floor of Union. It's like quiet and there's sofa and stuff.

Scott: You were really quick with that.

Delaney: There's a meditation slash yoga room on that floor as well, which is, rumor has it, soundproof, so, I've definitely dozed off in there on accident. On purpose, I've dozed off in the first-floor Willis in those little cubes.

Harshal: Well, I would definitely say not one of my classes, but I would say, Willis library fourth floor, because I think, I usually go to Willis Library on the fourth floor to study because it's kind of quiet in there. And then, I usually get bored, and they have like a little pause in there and you can just go in there and maybe get a little nap before the exam starts. So, I would say fourth floor Willis Library. But also, I love napping in my classes as well.

Alicia: Exposed.

Harshall: That's why my professors don’t like me too much because I’m not the student who likes to sit on the front bench. I'm the back bencher.

Delaney: It's OK. I have a photo of myself freshman year asleep in The Syndicate and I didn't even know I was asleep in The Syndicate.

Alicia: Oh, my goodness. Well, thank you guys for coming on the pod and thank you for all these great answers and recommendations. I'm definitely going to use a lot of those. So, yeah, be sure to give @tourunt a follow on to Instagram to learn more about the Eagle Ambassador program. Go Me Green, baby.

Group: Go Mean Green!

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: Alicia, that interview was so fun. It's always so energizing when we get a chance to talk to students.

Alicia: For sure. They were so great. Be sure to check out the show notes for links to learn more about the Eagle Ambassador program or to book a tour and meet one in person. Scotty, I hear you have another Democracy Primer segment for us up next.

Scott: You heard right. The election is just a few weeks away now, and I think this interview should be especially useful for Texas voters. Just down the ballot from the presidential election, we have Senator Ted Cruz is facing a challenge from current House Representative Colin Allred. As always, we're not here to tell you who to vote for, but we do want you to be as informed as possible. So, I spoke to political science principal lecturer Eddie Mears to learn more about some of the key differences between the Senate and the House. This one's a little bit longer than our typical segments, but I found it informative with a lot of information I didn't fully retain from my social studies classes.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Scott: I know I've learned about this in like eighth grade social studies class, about the differences between the House and the Senate, but I haven't really retained a ton of it. So, can you give me just a kind of a basic explainer because there's the House of Representatives. There's the Senate. When people say Congress, does that just refer to both as one body?

Eddie: OK. All right. Good questions all around. All right. So, you look at Article One of the Constitution. It's very interesting that they the very first thing that they take up in the Constitution deals with the legislative power. And we are talking about the government having the power to do things. But, it says all legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and the House of Representatives. All right. That's how Article One starts out. Why did they put it first? Well, making laws is one of the things we want the government to do. And that's probably, you know, the government can't do anything without having the authority of Congress behind. Congress has to allow the government to act. That's, you know, theoretically, that's why we have government. We want there to bring order to society, because, boy, if we don't have government, everybody's out doing their own thing. All right. So, Congress created what we call, the Constitution created what we call a bicameral legislature. Now, that's a, I think, that's a Latin word. Two-chambered is what they were referring to. And you have two chambers now in Congress. These two chambers are going to be the House of Representatives, and they're going to have the United States Senate. Now, one of the things that's interesting is that the constituency of the House is different from the constituency of the Senate. And by constituency, what I mean is these are the residents in the area from which an official is elected. So, for example, Congressman Jackson's district, which I think kind of includes part of Western Denton and then goes all the way up, I don’t know where it goes, it gets lost up there in panhandle somewhere. All right. Now, the people that are living in that congressional district are Congressman Jackson's constituents. They're responsible for deciding whether or not he gets elected to office or, if he's in office, if he loses, lose his office or whatever. But, those are his constituents. Now, somebody like Senator Cornyn, his constituency is everybody in Texas, because the U.S. senators from Texas are elected on a statewide vote. So, the constituency for the House is limited to a congressional district, probably around 750,000 folks. I don't remember the exact number, it kind of changes as the population goes up. But when Congressman Jackson, he's running for reelection this year, I believe, and he only has to worry about the voters in his particular congressional district. Senator Cornyn, or maybe we should talk more about Senator Cruz, since he's up for reelection. Senator Cornyn, by the way, is up for is, is seeking to become the Republican leader in the Senate. So, we'll see how that works. But Senator Cruz is up for reelection and that decision is going to be made by the voters of Texas. But that was on purpose. When they have different constituencies, the House members are more attuned to local interests. Senators are concerned not only with what's going on in Congressman Jackson's district, but, you know, Senator Cruz has got to worry about what's going on out in El Paso. He's got to worry about what's going on in Beaumont. He's got to worry about, you know, what's going on in in Texarkana. He's got to worry about what's going on in Brownwood and the needs of a, you know, congressional district may be entirely different. I lived out in West Texas for a long time, and it was helpful if you were a, you know, U.S. representative, if you were on the House Agriculture Committee, because you get out in West Texas and there's lots of cotton and cows in, at least in parts of West Texas. Now there's cotton, cow, cows and wind turbines, you know, which kind of changes things. But that's what you're more interested in on the local level. And, you know, what's the business climate like on the local level? And, you know, you know, maybe if you're down on the coast of Texas, you're more concerned about hurricane damage and, you know, maybe up in this part of the state, we're more interested in damage from tornadoes or something or wildfires. But, that was deliberate on the part of Congress. When they were drafting the Constitution, there was a big issue of how do we want to provide … The U.S. is, is a republic, which means that we elect our government officials, and they go and do, you know, the people's business as far as coming up with rules and regulations and all of that? They make the laws. But the question was, how do we represent folks? And, basically, it was it boils down to an issue between big states, big population states and little states. And there were two plans that came up in the Constitutional convention. The first plan was what we called the Virginia Plan. And the Virginia Plan said, well, we're going to do representation based on state population. And so, the larger the state population is, then the proportion of, of the larger the state, they're going to have more representatives in Congress, in the House of Representatives. Well, actually, they were just thinking of one representative chamber probably at the time. And, you know, the big states like that, because it's like we've got you know, there's more of us than maybe folks in Rhode Island. Maybe you're from Virginia and you're saying, `You know, we got a lot of people here and they need to they're probably going to be contributing more to the to the federal government through tax revenues and all this sort of stuff. So, they should have a greater voice in the House of Representatives, or in Congress, just in general.’ But it was going to be based on population. And then, there were opponents. One of the opponents was the state of New Jersey. And they're going, wait a minute, what about the small population states? We're just going to get the you know, we're going to be run over by the large population states. If they control the bulk of the the congressional seats. And so, the folks from New Jersey said, `Well, here's what we want to do. Let's have every state with equal representation. So, Virginia, you can have two representatives. New Jersey, we get two representatives,’ you know, and then you kind of go on down the line. But each state has a voice, of course. What do you think the problem was there with the New Jersey plan or.

Scott: Well, the thing that comes to mind is every state has equal voice, but not every voice represents an equal amount of people.

Eddie: That's exactly right. And, that is the problem. And so, you know, so you had the Virginia plan going with the number of people, which that makes sense in a democracy. You know, you know, the majority, but it cuts out the kind of it's not to say that the little, the smaller states won't have representatives, but, you know, probably it's going to be dominated by the big states, and they didn't want that. And then, of course, the big states kind of balked at the New Jersey plan because it's, like, just, just as you said, that's not going to be fair because you got to folks representing a lot more folks than maybe in New Jersey. So, fortunately, they agreed to compromise. Compromise. That's how you get things done in government. You know, and if they hadn't compromised, I'm not sure where we would be today. But the folks from Connecticut, and we call this historically, we call it the Connecticut compromise, or the Great Compromise is another term for it. But they the differences between the Virginia plan and the New Jersey plan. And so, the compromise was to create a two-chambered legislature. The House was going to have representation apportioned by the population in each state. So, the House is based on population, and then the Senate is based on equal representation of the states. And so, a small state is going to have two senators. A large state is going to have two senators. But then you flip it around in the House and you have a large population state. They're going to have more representatives. And now, here's the deal. Here's how this works, is because to get legislation through Congress on to the president's desk for his signature, it's going to have to go through the House. It's going to have to go through the Senate. And then, the final document that said to the president has to be exactly the same and so you're going to have the input from the larger, you know, in the House, you're going to have the input from the smaller states in the Senate. But to get it to the president's desk, everybody's got to agree, both chambers have to agree to the compromise language. And so, you can't have the House version going to the president and, you know, cut out the Senate and, you know, flip it around. You can't have a Senate version going to the president with cutting out the House. That's not how it works, because you get legislation and, you know, it's voted on in the House and maybe then it's sent over to the Senate or vice versa. And they're going to have to, you know, you get one chamber, and they come up with a version and they send it over to the other chamber and they do you know, they're asking questions. They're doing committee hearings. They're proposing amendments. They're having debates about the merits and the demerits of the legislation. And then, you have the Senate version and then, you know, you kind of have the final House version, you kind of have the final Senate version. Then, you're going to have to get a committee together to work out the details to make sure that you only have one version, and sometimes that works and sometimes that doesn't work. But you've got to have agreement from the senators and representatives that are on the committee to agree to the final version. And then, you have to send it back to the House and the Senate. And it's kind of an up or down vote on this. And, you know, the legislation could die in any step of the way here because, you know, maybe the Senate says, `No, we're not going with the House version. We're not going to do it,’ or the House goes with this, you know, says the same thing about the Senate version, and that won't work. And so, there's got to be compromise and there has to be agreement between the House and the Senate. So, you have agreement between the large states and population states, and then you have an agreement with. now, it's interesting with the Senate originally, the states, the state legislature, maybe the governor or whatever, picked the senators. And we did not have direct election of the senators for quite a while. I think that was something that came in in the in the 19th century, but started to have direct elections. But originally, the state legislature would pick the senators and then they serve for a six-year term and all that. But the senators were really there to represent the interests of the states. But then, the voting and it's kind of like `why we're voting for the legislature to pick the senator. Why can't we just pick the senator on our own?’ And it just kind of morphed into that, that, you know, they think of a state like Texas, the two largest states in the union right now are Texas and California. You know, I guess you’ve got one progressive state, and you got one conservative state there between the two, the two states, they control, you know, probably 60, 70 seats. I don't know the exact number off the top of my head, but they control, you know, maybe out of the 435 seats in the in the House, that's a big chunk because we're the largest population states now, after the last Senate, or the last census, California actually lost some of their population and they actually lost a congressional seat because it no longer supported, didn't have the population to support it. And Texas actually picked up an additional congressional seat, which we have been doing, you know, for the past 20, 30 years, I guess is the population of Texas increases it. As that happens, we get more representatives coming from Texas just because we have the population. So, you know, it really wasn't any kind of surprise to me a few years ago when we had, kind of the Kevin McCarthy was, when he was speaker and then when he was Republican leader in the House, he was from California. And Nancy Pelosi, you know, for the Democrats, she was in California, too, and then two different parts that, you know, the odds were a little bit better that you could have two people doing that just because of the numbers. But, now, what happens in the if your population is declining, you actually lose congressional seats. Now, every seat in every state is going to get at least one representative, even if they don't have seven or 800,000 folks to support it, because you're at least going to get one representative. But you have a a small population state. I think it's like Wyoming, may have a small population. They only get one U.S. representative that, but flip it around. They get two U.S. senators because, of course, we get two U.S. senators. But then we also have our population. So, it kind of works out really well for that. But that's, you know, that's the difference between the two. The other thing that's kind of interesting between the House and the Senate is that the House terms are only for two years. Kind of touch back on term limits. And they get that on purpose because they wanted you get elected and, you know, you think about all the issues that we're facing here in in 2024. All right. And you get elected to the House and your kind of very much aware of all of the issues and the political demands and the controversies and all this. And you've come from that and you're dealing with that. And, in another two years, you may still be dealing with that. I guess my point is that the House is designed to maybe be a little bit more reactionary. And so, the current trends or whatever they have going on now, you limit the, you know, the term for the House member is at two years. The public opinion can change, or it may not change, but two years that was deliberately done because they didn't, they wanted to keep them rather fresh. And if their ideas were kind of two years old or whatever, then they want to be able to get somebody else in there that has the freshest memories or whatever, and or what what's on the people's minds at that time. I guess one way you could think of it is House members are a little bit more politically vulnerable because they've got to stay up on all the current events and what's going on and they need to adapt with the changes, you know, and those could change in a couple of years. And, if that's the case, if they're not changing nothing, they can bring somebody else in. That represents the new line of thinking. Senators serve six years. And one of the little quotes I’ve got here, it was designed to guard against excessive democracy. What I like to tell my students sometimes is, you know, maybe you're growing up, your teenager and you go to your parents, `Oh, I need this. You know, this is the latest whiz-bang electronic something, whatever. And it's so wonderful and everybody has one and I need one.’ And, you know, you take that idea to your parents and you probably say it's, you know, your mom or your dad come to us and says, `Let's think about that. And all of a sudden, you're like, that, that's kind of that may be kind of one way to, to think of the Senate, because they serve for longer and they are not as sensitive to changes in public opinion. And they can look at an issue and think, `OK, the House has kind of proposed this, but the houses kind of quick tempered and, you know, kind of coming up and maybe they haven't thought the idea through well enough, but we're here and, you know, maybe I've just gotten reelected and I'm going to be here for six years. Those House members are here, you know, only for two years. And I'm looking at it from a little bit different perspective. And maybe I've got some institutional memory or whatever.’ And, they may kind of be like, `Well, let's tone that down a little bit,’ or `Yeah, that's a good idea. Have you thought about this, or have you thought about that?’ But that's what the senate is supposed to be because sometimes, you know, a senator can make a politically controversial decision that, if the House member were to do the same thing, the House member might be voted out after a year or two in office. The senator, though, may be able to do that. And then, folks may not be so angry at the senator six years later when they're out for election, because time can kind of kind of heal things on that. So, and then, of course, another big difference between the House and the Senate is, the Senate is only is alone given the power to ratify treaties in presidential appointments. So, you know, if it's a Supreme Court vacancy, the House has nothing to do with that. And, if it's ratifying a treaty, like trade relations between the United States, Mexico and Canada or whatever, that is solely the authority of the Senate. Now, the House is given sole power to originate revenue bills. You know, so we're talking taxes, and the people get it. You know, people get angry about taxes. You know, it's just one of those things. But, I'm kind of realistic with stuff. It’s like, `Yeah, you're going to have to pay taxes. It's just yeah, just do it, you know?’ But those have to come out of the House because you're talking about, you know, generating revenue in taxes and that's a politically sensitive thing. And, if people don't like it, they can put guys out a lot sooner than they can in the Senate there. So, that's the House of the Senate.

Scott: Simple. With the House having two-year term limits, and you talked about how the numbers can shift. Texas is getting a new representative, California's losing a representative. How often do those shifts happen? Because that's based on the census, right?

Eddie: Yeah, that's the census. So, every 10 years we everybody stops and we count noses, and then, you kind of get an idea of the population of each state. And that's what we call, the process, the technical term is called reapportionment. So, every 10 years, and this only affects the House of Representatives, but based on the population, every 10 years we stop and count noses. And then, you've only got 435 House seats in the House of Representatives. But then, every state is going to get at least one representative. But then, those other congressional seats are all going to be based on population. So, what we've kind of seen over the years is the population of maybe the population of some of the northeastern industrial states has declined. I say it's all because of central air conditioning. But, you know, you have have a number of people moving from maybe the northeast and then they're moving to places like Texas and California. And, you know, you see, I think here in just in the metro DFW metro area, we're one of the fastest-growing areas of the country. And so, that happens every 10 years. And so, they figure out how many states, or how many representatives each state is going to get. And then, that's what we call the reapportionment. And so, we figure out how many representatives each state it's going to get, and that can change every 10 years. And then, there's what we call redistricting. And so, once a state figures out how many U.S. representatives they're going to have, then it's up to the legislature down in Austin to figure out how those congressional district lines are going to be drawn. And, if you pick up population, then, you know, you’ve got to work with the current districts, but then you may have to redraw the district lines a little bit so that, you know, you take account of population. I think the last time we did this here in Texas, based on the 2020 census, I think at least two of the seats, probably since the legislature is controlled by the Republicans, two of those seats were, were going to go to where, you know, it could be to the benefit of Republican officeholders. And then, one of the districts was going to be more likely not Democratic, because we do have Democrats in Texas, and we do have U.S. representatives that are Democratic. But they're, you know, they're kind of static, scattered all over the state. But, there's a process called gerrymandering, which that's kind of the process by drawing those district lines in such a way that maybe benefits the Republican or the Democratic Party. Now, you know, since the Republicans have controlled Texas politics on statewide level for years now, the legislature is going to do everything it can to try to draw the congressional district lines in a way that will benefit the Republicans. If you're in a state, you know, a different state that, you know, has control of the Democratic Party in the legislature, the Democrats are going to do the same thing and they're going to do as much as they can to draw congressional district lines that benefit Democrats and, you know, make it harder for Republicans to get elected.

Scott: Yeah, yeah. I feel like gerrymandering can be its own full, if not segment, its own full episode. That's a whole ball of yarn. I was just going to ask you one more question about the House or the Senate. Obviously, the populations are different. I think you said 435 in the House, it's 100 in the Senate. Can you talk about, is there a general perception of one being, I don't know if prestigious is the right word, but with the Senate being less people, is that generally considered to be a more powerful position, or can you talk about that a little bit?

Eddie: Well, they're equally powerful. They're equally powerful. Nothing's going to happen without the consent of the House in the Senate. So, the thing with the senator, though, they have longer terms, there's less of them. They're probably going to be more in the public eye than, you know, a U.S. representative. Now, you know, depending who you are in the house, you know, if you have personality or whatever, or if you're the chairman of a very important committee, like, if you were chair of the House Judiciary Committee, you know, or you know, they deal with impeachments, you know, that that could be, you know, kind of a good example. But usually, you know, everybody knows who the speaker of the House is. Well, I won't say everybody. Speaker Johnson is just a U.S. representative from Louisiana. And I think, you know, before he became speaker, at least in the public eye, a lot of people are like, `Who is this guy?’ But of course, that's very prestigious in and of itself. But, you know, you've got a rank-and-file member of the House that's just elected to office. They're one of 435. They're new. They haven't been there very long. Nobody's going to know who they are. So, you kind of have to build a name for yourself in the House a little bit more. With the Senate, you know, with the Senate and then the House, you know, the division of labor. They break everything down in both branches, or both chambers break things down into committee work. But, you know, in the House, you may just be on one committee over in the Senate, you may be on a couple of very important committees. So, there's equal amount of work, but there's less of you to do it. And that can kind of raise your awareness in there, just so that, I won't say prestigious. You know, sometimes people say, `Well, it's kind of like the House of Lords sitting in, you know, in the British, in the English system or whatever. But the House of Lords is more like a rubber stamp that, you know, that they are, you know, kind of like the elder statesman, in a sense or statesperson, let's put it that way, out there. But I think, you know, it might be a little bit more prestige. Let me just say, you probably get more public. The chances are better of you becoming, you know, kind of a, a name just because, like, if you're the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and there's a Supreme Court or a federal court vacancy, people are going to know your name. If you're Senate majority leader, of course, the leadership people know your names. But the Senate, the Senate majority and minority leaders, and these are just basically the kind of the chief Republican in the Senate or the chief or, you know, the chief Democrat in the Senate. We usually hear from those folks on a daily basis. And then, of course, we also hear on a daily basis people like, you know, Speaker Johnson or Minority Leader Jeffries, I believe, is name in the house.

Scott: Yeah, Jeffries.

Eddie: Yeah. You know, so the media picks up on those folks just because they're in a leadership position. If you're in a leadership position, chances are people are going to know who you are a little bit better, or at least they're going to have heard of your name. But I don't know how often Congressman Burgess actually made, you know, the national news. Every once in a while, it would pop up on things. But you didn't see his name in the in the papers, maybe on the local level you might. But, I mean, on the national news and all that, chances are you're hearing from the House leadership, Republican and Democrat, but then it could be a senator more often.

Scott: And then, I said that was my last question, but I thought it would more so if you’ll indulge me. So, here in Texas this year, we've got Colin Allred, who's currently in the House of Representatives, who will be challenging Ted Cruz for the spot in the Senate. What happens? Does he have to kind of forfeit his seat in the House of Representatives or if he loses to Cruz, does he get to keep that? How does that work?

Eddie: Now, Texas had a weird law because I think, years ago, they let Lyndon Johnson run for president and run for reelection as senator. But I don't remember. That's kind of ancient history. I don't remember that one. I think Mr. Allred’s situation is he's not running for his House seat. And I think, I think they're, you know, they're trying to fight over who's going to succeed him. But then, you know, and that was kind of like Beto O'Rourke a few years ago. Beto O'Rourke was a U.S. representative from El Paso and, you know, so he was a member of the House. But in order to run in the Senate, he couldn't run for both. And so, I think that's the same with Mr. Allred. If he, if he wins, of course, he'll be a senator. If he doesn't win, then, you know, he'll be looking for other work.

Scott: Yeah.

Eddie: Could become a lobbyist or something like that, you know, or he could, you know, kind of. Now, of course, one of the things that Allred runs into problems with is he may not be a well-known name outside of the DFW area. And, but then, you have somebody like Senator Cruz that's been in office for, 12 years now, I believe. And he's kind of a household name. They know the name. And I think just that alone is kind of give, you know, an advantage to Mr. Cruz. That's not to say, though, that, you know, you serve. The longer you serve in office, the bigger that target on your rear end is. You know, people start holding grudges or whatever and, you know, you get in office long enough and people are, you know, then we go back to term limits. It’s `OK, we've had enough of this guy and let's move on to something else.’ But, you know. And, there is the advantage of being an incumbent and current office holder. Now, you know, if Mr. Allred had just decided to run for reelection as a House member around here, and especially in his congressional district, then they'd know his name and they know who he is. But then, you're trying to introduce Colin Allred already to a, you know, a district down in San Antonio, and they're like, `Who is this guy?’ And, you know, so there is the incumbency advantage, really with reelection chances, you've got a pretty good chance in the House and the Senate of getting reelected. That's not to say, you know, you serve two years and you're out, but chances are you're going to get reelected. That starts to fall off a little bit, maybe after six years, which is also the term office of a U.S. senator. You know, and so you started painting that target on your rear end. And that can pull it out. But, even then, chances are, if you being reelected, reelected as an incumbent, are very good.

[TRANSITION MUSIC]

Alicia: Dude, I had no idea the number of representatives a state gets can change as the population shifts.

Scott: I know, me neither. It's one of those things that makes good sense, but just never occurred to me to think about.

Alicia: Good stuff, Scootle, but now it's time for my favorite part of the show. Let's A some Qs.

Scott: Right? What's today's question, Alicia?

Alicia: I have a question: What are some of your best memories during college? That can be both like your community and or UNT.

Scott: Best memory is, like, hands down the study abroad trip I did. Like I said, I did German for my foreign language and then ended up minoring in it because I made good friends, like, in the class. Those friends, I kind of, you know, we all decided we wanted to do the study abroad trip. And then, after doing the study abroad trip, I was like,`All right, well, we just need, like, two more classes to make this a minor. So, let's go ahead and all do that together.’ But, yeah, it was let's see here, summer of 2009 and we stayed in Leipzig, Germany, and it was my first time out of the country. It was really, you know, since I, you know, you know, a commuter school and lived at home during college, it was like my first, like, extended time away family. I think it was, I think, it was, like, five or six weeks we did. So, it was just, like, a really formative experience for me. And made some really good friends. Two guys who, like, one, was my best man, the other one was one of my groomsmen in my wedding. We still keep in touch. Like, when we came back, we ended up, the other two guys got an apartment together and then, after that lease, was up like we all moved into a house together. And then, after that lease was up, me and one of the other guys moved into, like, a duplex together, so that, that was for sure, like, the biggest, biggest thing for me that, like, just had a real impact and was kind of, you know, first time travel, traveling out of the country is, like ... That’s a big, like, growth moment for me for sure.

Alicia: Yeah, traveling’s scary out of the country. So much can happen.

Scott: Yeah, and doing it, like, I don't know, I can't remember exactly. I know, like, a fair amount of the class, like, all traveled together, like, left DFW at the same time and were on the same flights, but I wasn't, so I had to, like, meet everybody there. So, I was like, you know, going to a foreign country for the first time ever, like, by myself and having to figure out, like, how to find everybody. And the guy who one of the guys who I became good friends with who, I roomed with on the trip. He found me at, like, the train station and got me back with everybody. And, yeah, it was one of those things that, like, I'll never forget, like, it was my, my only regret from that trip was at that time, like, growing up all through high school, like, I was, I was, like, straight-edge, like, didn't drink, didn't touch drugs, didn't do anything. And so that stayed with me through most of college until I got to, like, my last semester. And it was super stressful. `Maybe drinking's not so bad. Maybe I need to check this out.’ But so, I went to Germany. I went to, like, Munich to, like, this world-famous brewery, and I didn't have any beer the whole time I was in Germany and I look back on it now and I'm like, `Oh, God, what a waste that was.’

Alicia: Oh, my goodness.

Scott: Yeah, that's right. That's right. Well, what about you? What was what was your best memory of UNT?

Alicia: Now, I didn't have anything too exciting like that happen during mine because COVID happened, and so a lot of it got cut off. I only spent, like, my freshman and my senior year on campus, and it was like freshman year cut off and then senior year, all of it. So, it was like a lot of it was COVID. So, to then go about answering that would be, I would say, probably meeting the people that I'm probably going to have in my wedding one day. Those are my best memories. Like, because, like, in high school, every everything was so dramatic. Everything was like, you know, at least in college, I felt like I could pick the people I could have a part of my life and vice versa with them, hopefully. Like, I hope that's the case with the people. But, yeah, I'd say probably meeting the people I'm going to hopefully, I see being my friends for the rest of my life.

Scott: Yeah. Did you meet them through like the running club or, like, through classes and stuff?

Alicia: I met a couple of them through my current boyfriend, who I met at UNT. I met, like, a couple of the girls who are probably are going to be in my wedding one day. And then, I met one through a stint that I pulled by working two jobs during college, because I thought that was smart. I thought that was smart doing two part-time jobs while full time school. Yeah. You know, just, you know, being quirky. I worked for the I work for UNT rec sports for like a month, a good month, a solid because, you know, I thought again, like, I thought I could do two jobs at once and I realized I couldn't. So, I stuck with dining, but I met, after one event UNT rec sports. There's this girl I got paired up with to like to work with my coworker and we, like, clicked super-fast and I thought that was like the coolest day ever.

Alicia: All right, well, now that you've heard our favorite memories, we want to hear yours. So, email us at podcast@UNT.edu or call us at 940-565-4341. Especially with homecoming just around the corner, hit us up with that nostalgia.

Scott: Yes, please. And don't forget to tell friend about the show, share it on social media, or leave us a rating and review wherever you listen so we can grow this thing.

Alicia: Don't you want your friends to have a happy Friday too? Tap that share button pronto.

Scott: All right. Well, that does it for us today. So, until next episode, 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. Today's show was produced and edited by Scott Brown with original reporting by Amanda Lyons, Alicia Zartman and Scott Brown. For more information, visit UNT.edu/podcast.

[BLOOPER REEL]

Alicia: But it didn't sound weird?

Scott: I mean.

Alicia: It sounded weird. I know it did. It sounded weird. I didn't know what I was saying and how I said it. Don't lie to me, Scotty.

Scott: It was good.

Alicia: OK.

Scott: Texas success ... Gonna have to say that one slow or it's going to sound bad.

Alicia: I was still thinking of math. Dang, Scott can't even read what you write. So many t's in the script. Yeah, it is Texas. Oh. my gosh. Does that sound natural?

Scott: Yeah.

Alicia: Good. OK. OK.