Today, our guests are a roster of Senior Fellows from recent years of our Baylor Fellows program. This fellowship recognizes professors across the disciplinary spectrum who exemplify excellence in teaching. Baylor Fellows are committed to a year-long process of pedagogical innovation, inspirational teaching, and the cultivation of these among Baylor faculty. Joining us today, we have:

- **Nadine Welch** – Associate Chair of Residential Academic Programs, Clinical Associate Professor, and Undergraduate Program Director in Communication Sciences and Disorders (and returning guest), Robbins College of Health and Human Performance
- **Holly Collins** – Associate Professor of French
- **Lyn Prater** – Clinical Professor of Nursing and Undergraduate Level IV Coordinator, Louise Herrington School of Nursing
- **Chris Meyer** – Associate Professor in Management, Hankamer School of Business

…all at Baylor University. We are delighted to have these great faculty on the show to discuss how pedagogical experiments take shape, what we can learn from colleagues in other disciplines, and thinking about your long-term trajectory as a teacher.

All right, well, Chris Meyer, Nadine Welch, Holly Collins, Lyn Prater. Thank you for joining the show today. We are delighted to talk today about your experiences, and you all have different experiences with this because you were in different cohorts. But your experiences with what we call the Baylor Fellows Program. And I thought maybe a helpful way to kind of enter into this conversation would be to ask you to do a little comparing of your experiences as what we would just call a regular fellow—and we've invited you on the show because you all have served as Senior Fellows as well, which means that after a year as a fellow, you were selected to carry on and create some continuity for the next group and take a leadership role in the second year that you were part of the program. Maybe I'll ask Nadine because you have most recently had this transition from the regular fellow to the senior fellow. What has been your experience about how that is different?

Nadine Welch: Well, thanks for having us first. It is fun at any time that we get to talk about the Fellows program, and it has been different this year. Aside from administrative pieces, it’s been a year so far this fall, of really being more focused on the other fellows rather than self-focus on myself, which is probably how we should lead every day of our life. But it's just that chance of knowing…last year I was trying to figure out what I should be doing. I was very self-focused on myself and my project this year. And this year, it's been really fun to sit back and see the other fellows in the group and the ideas that they've come up with. Just a little bit more brain space, probably, to focus and listen to what my colleagues were doing rather than worrying about what I'm doing.

CR: Yeah, and Chris, I think you were, you were the inaugural senior fellow. You were kind of paving the way on that. So what was that experience like for you?

Chris Meyer: It was an interesting experience, and I would echo what Nadine said. I started out in the program just really focused on how am I innovating? What are the things that I'm doing in the classroom? And I know that we had a cohort. And the cohort was great because we all bounced ideas. And we had
some really excellent ideas in the room at the time. Then when Lenore asked me to continue on in the Senior Fellow role, I was a little surprised, but very excited to then step into that leadership role and really think through how can we all integrate better? How can we all learn more from each other? That was a really exciting time to continue along and really focus on what is everyone doing, instead of just how can I keep my head above water? Can I do this experimentation on my own and make it work? It was a really excellent experience to work with a cohort, having had some experience going through and experimentation in my classroom and saying there are things that aren't going to work and that's okay. Don't be afraid. There are things that are going to go wrong. Don't be afraid. That’s okay. And that was a really liberating experience to have gone through it for a year and then to continue on.

CR: Yeah. Lyn, if I've got my dates right here. You were a fellow and senior fellow during Covid transitions. I think Holly had a little bit of that as well. So how did that affect the meetings and just how you functioned together as a cohort?

Lyn Prater: Yeah. Thank you. Dr. Richmann, for asking about that Yes. When I was a fellow, my year as a fellow, we were in regular mode meeting all together in the classroom over in the building where the ATL meets. Then when I was asked to be the senior Fellow is when the pandemic happened, 2021, we started out in the fountain mall tent because we thought we were going to be able to, in August, come back together and be present together in a space on the tent, on the mall. Our first meeting happened in that tent. It was, there was a rainstorm happening, the tent flaps were blowing. But Craig, our wonderful helper, brought in all the equipment we needed. We had projector and microphone. I was pretty determined that we would be face to face for this wonderful exchange of ideas. But after that first meeting with trying to pass around a microphone and keep it clean and deal with the outside noises for our microphones…anyway, we realized that it just was not going to work, and so we into virtual mode and continued our meetings on Zoom. That changes the dynamics—not for the worse, but we just had to change. We had to make that change as we were all doing in our classrooms. Anyway, it brought into the reality for us as a group, what we were all experiencing as faculty and teachers, with our students. But it was a wonderful experience; and because I'm not on the main campus, being a fellow, I got to meet certainly people that I had not met and heard their projects. But being the senior fellow, I felt like you all were saying, I was able to focus on the faculty at hand and learn so much from the different disciplines. I think the beauty of this program is that we have different, the different disciplines together. Sharing and, you know, nursing does things way different than Marius in Mathematics, right? I mean, that's a whole nother deal. But, but we had some similarities too that we were able to borrow from each other, our teaching strategies. So I would say the pandemic, moving from in the classroom face to face to our virtual format was probably one of the biggest differences from my being a regular fellow, to be senior fellow and running the show, so to speak.

CR: Yeah. Well, Holly, anything to add on that?

Holly Collins: Well, I think that the virtual format worked well with the theme for that year because it was technology in the classroom and using technology students like Lynn said, we tried really hard that first meeting to all be together. But I have flashbacks of the tent,

LP: I've got a picture on my computer in case anybody want to see it.

HC: …the noises… to have continued in that manner, particularly since we were focusing on technology, it would have been difficult. It worked well and Lenore did a great job keeping us all engaged in the zoom format. But as far as my senior fellow year, I would say that the phrase hurting cats comes to mind trying to get ten academics doing the same thing at the same time. This is not just any academics. The Fellows Program are the top people, academic colleagues that have really big projects going on, who are typically working on several committees, several interdisciplinary endeavors with their colleagues. We all have
very busy schedules. It was hard to get everybody together. I think one moment I reached out to Lenore and asked her, We're not finding a time, What do we do? I said, okay if one person misses this month, but then we make sure that that person doesn't miss the next one. And she said, well, we really need to get everybody together. How about 7:00 A.M.? That really lit a fire under me because I am not a morning person. I reached out to the group and a couple of people said, yeah, I can do 07:00 A.M. And I'm sitting there fretting, thinking, oh, this is terrible, I can't do it. But we eventually were able to work out a schedule. It was really cool to be the senior fellow that year because the things that everybody was working on just blew me away. I can reiterate what the rest of you have said, that in your regular fellow year, you're working on your project, you're doing your thing, you're learning from the others, incorporating that. But then as senior fellow, making sure that everybody has a good experience and that everybody's getting something out of the program is really important. I was able to focus more on the different projects that everybody was working on, some of the lab projects. Our theme was engaging undergraduates in scholarly work. Seeing what my colleagues were doing with undergraduates, just really creating a professional environment for them, creating an experience for the undergraduates that would not just serve only the educational purpose in the classroom, but actually really give them a boost into their next step, whether it be into a lab, into professional or graduate school, or into the workforce, was really impressive.

CR: That's great. Let's talk about those projects that you all did when you were regular fellow. And the language that I hear often around the Baylor Fellows Program is experimentation. To try something different, to try something new. For many years, as Holly has alluded here, we've gathered you all around themes so that there's a core that you're working with together. What were the projects that you all did? And how did having a community or a cohort there with you working through it affect the way that you approached the project? Lynn is nodding. I'll start with you.

LP: Thank you. So my year was education for international work education. I do a lot of international work. That's why I think why I was chosen for that. And it was so much fun because everybody then in the cohort is talking about the thing that you really love. I have to say that my experience was talking about the art of being a good guest. I take students not only on mission trips internationally. I do study abroad to Great Britain and have done it in Argentina. But in nursing, we also take our students to the hospital. Right. And I translated what I really talk about with my faculty that I work with and my students about being a good guest in the hospital and not sitting down and taking all the chairs at the nurses’ station or immediately eating the doughnuts that someone brought that you weren't even given the invitation to eat. Translating that into how we are a good guest using the pedagogy of cultural humility and being on being out of the country with our students. That was my project. I liked that we had the whole year to work on that. Dr. Richmann, I'll say that because when Lenore called and asked me, invited me to be the fellow with that topic in mind, it took a lot to figure out what my project was going to be then being able to launch it at the Provost luncheon. I think that was the name of the luncheon that we got to meet with faculty. I launched it there and I had some great conversation around the table. And actually it was art of being a guest was really going to be my topic. And then one of the people at the luncheon had said, well really you might want to qualify that to being a good guest. Anyway, it was a great opportunity to have the time to work on it and talk about it and run it by people who have other options to think about. Then in the spring, I was able to bring that into—I didn't do it in my classroom. I did my experiment in one of our mission meetings where all the students who are going on the various mission trips at the nursing school, we meet once a month. So one person would speak about safety, one person would speak about being, having cultural humility. That was the day that I spoke on that because we're supposed to have someone watch our classes because I was in Dallas, Dr. Wright, Lenore Wright came to the nursing school. Did you come that day, Dr. Richmann, with her? Right.

LP: Yeah. She's the one who observed my class, so it was a wonderful opportunity to try something different and have input from people who I might not normally have input from. Right? That was the beauty, really for me, that was having so many different people, I was able to bounce those ideas off of many different people that I normally would not have had the opportunity to.

CR: Thanks. Yeah. Other thoughts about how that cohort or community aspect of it really impacted the work that you did?

HC: I think that one of the things that Lynn mentions there was key is having the feedback from your colleagues, but in particular having feedback from colleagues from so many different disciplines because they'll think about things from a different perspective. The year that I was in Lyn’s group, I did a project. I had my students create. I teach French. We're working with the language constantly and looking for creative ways to get students to use the language. Right? It's not just about memorizing the rules, but it's about being able to use the language in a communicative way. The project I worked on that year was having students choose your own fate stories. I think any child of the '80s maybe remembers those and they're very exciting, having them create those through either a PowerPoint or some other presentation medium. It's almost like making a game for their fellow students to be able to play. I had the idea to do that, but then once I started getting input from colleagues in the group, the really cool part was, for example, someone from the business school said, well, if you get permission from your students, but then take these and create a repertoire online that people could subscribe to. Not necessarily for money, but that people could subscribe to. Instead of just having this class with these students learning this one thing, you could provide that for future classes. Or you could provide that even just people out there on the web to help them working their language. Just having input from different disciplines, helping us to think outside of the box that we usually think in was hugely helpful.

CR: Yeah, that's great. And such a rare experience too, right?

HC: Yeah, definitely.

CM: I'd like to add that in the cohort, we're all thinking experimentation, there were some wild ideas. And you could go sit in that room with ten other people that also had wild ideas. And not hear, how are you going to pull that off? That seems outlandish. That's too much. Instead you'd hear, wow, that's really interesting. Have you thought about this? Just like Holly just said, maybe you could take it even a step further. And I think that the cohort really helps you to embrace newness in your class. And come up with ideas that you think may be too far, maybe pushing it, but could push the students in a way that they haven't thought of either. That for me, was the biggest input. From my first year, the cohort just embraced ideas that I had. And we all came together to support the new ideas. In my second year in my senior fellow year, I made sure that that was the culture in the room. Like everybody brought ideas and everybody thought, hey, can I take that? Can I implement that? It wasn't my idea, it was our idea. And how can we take these ideas and make all of our classes better? And it was really just exciting to be part of that.

CR: I love that. I think unfortunately, a lot of the culture of teaching in higher ed often has a knee jerk reaction to say, well that's a good idea but, and then you like list all the reasons why it doesn't work in your discipline or doesn't work for your students, or it doesn't work in your schedule, or whatever the reason may be. One of my colleagues recently suggested a mindset that's based on improv. “Yes, and.” So it shifts, right? Your first reaction is not “but,” it's “yes. And how can I build that? How can I build off it? How can I make it work, even if it is a wild idea? And we'll see what happens.”

HC: Yeah, I think how the program is built around experimentation. It takes a minute to loosen everybody up, to think that I can do this, I can do an experiment in my class. And if it fails, that's still a learning
experience, right? And that's something we need to teach our students as well. Don't be afraid to fail. Get your ducks in a row. You got to have your ducks in a row. But there are certain places where it's okay to take a shot, to go for it. And having the support of the Fellows Program is huge in that.

NW: Dr. Richmann, just the platform that ATL has created with the Fellows Program is unique. And I can echo everything that everyone else has said as far as the benefit of having other people listen. But it is that interprofessional collaboration that we know it is being pushed in every article you read, you listen to is pushing that. But there's this lack of, maybe for lack of a better word, competition. There's this lack of, what are you doing? Am I doing enough? It's just this group that's together that you've created this atmosphere of true collaboration and really learning from each other. And we start with this level of respect for what everyone else is doing and sincere interest in how they're doing it. Accepting their ideas of you could make this better if you did such and such. It's been a great experiment.

CR: That’s great. Holly was mentioning, that growth mindset of maybe this won't work, maybe it'll flop. Which leads me to a question that I didn't ask you to think about ahead of time, but maybe you've got some thoughts here on this, is how did the students experience your experiments? I'm sure they weren't all flops, although as Holly said, we can learn from our fails as well.

CM: I'm happy to chime in on this. My experiment in my first year was based on an article in the journal *Science* that said, one of the best ways to increase critical thinking is to read literary fiction. I teach negotiation, not literary fiction, I thought. All right, let's see if we can find some good literary fiction books that include instances of human interaction. Because that's negotiation. I did that. I was very excited. Because I love literary fiction. I love reading. I love books. That's who we are as academics, right? We all love books of one sort or another. I brought in three books that I thought were outstanding, and classics, and great things for students to read. Some students were very excited that they weren't going to read a textbook. It wasn't going to be boring stuff. And some students were so upset that they had to read three books. It's a hit or miss sometimes, and we didn't read a book a day or anything crazy. But it's still, you're bringing something absolutely new and something that they haven't thought of before and a different way of thinking about negotiation to a business school class, and there was some pushback, but I also got incredible feedback at the end that because you're creating a shared experience of everybody's looking at the same situation, everybody's got the same experience and we can all discuss it in depth. We really got to some great critical thinking through this, which is exactly what I had hoped for. But again, I told them at the beginning, I said, this is an experiment. I've never done this before. You're the first to go through it. Let's see how it goes. We'll adjust, we'll make it work. Everyone was very gracious about that, although not everyone enjoyed the reading. That's typical, right? Not everyone's going to enjoy your textbook. Not everyone's going to enjoy your quizzes. Not everyone's going to enjoy the discussion in class. We have to build the class that we think is going to get the results that we're after. That was really the focus of it.

HC: I was also, like you said Chris, very transparent with my students that I was doing an experiment. As we all have mentioned before, the idea of the goal being to learn something and to grow. And not necessarily, I don't know, succeed on whatever predetermined idea of success is. I was very transparent with my students. I say, hey, this is new. I showed them some examples. It was actually my colleagues in Japanese that had shown me the choose your own fate story game idea. I showed them some examples of what students in other classes had created so that they knew where they were headed and what they were doing. We all had an idea of what goal we were trying to get to, but we also all knew that this was new for each of us. I think that transparency with the students gave them a little bit more latitude to be creative, to not be so concerned themselves with, okay, I've got to have this perfect project and get this grade. Because of that, the projects that the students turned in were very diverse. Some of them conceived of it in one way, and then different groups… I kind of had little cohorts in my class. I had a group of business fellows and their story revolved around, I think it was a couple meeting in business school or something
like that. But because of that transparency and that openness, they were able to be more creative and less afraid of turning in the perfect project and more interested in the experience of doing what they were doing.

NW: Communication with the students I felt like was key. Throughout the semester last year, we addressed our theme was how to engage, how to better educate the first-generation college student. Looking at that, we looked at universal design for learning—just saying that no matter whether your first gen or your second third gen, we all have different learning styles just continually throughout the semester saying this is universal design for learning principle. Or asking them what principle are we hitting here? Really empowered the students. They loved it. They loved becoming part of that, and surveys before and after just showed they learned it, they knew it well. They understood why it was important to all learners.

CR: That’s great. I’m wondering if any of you remember any particularly interesting or ambitious projects from colleagues that you were working with. You can feel free to name folks if you want to brag on them or not. But part of the joy of this kind of experience is just getting to see other people bring their ambitions to life.

NW: This year Stephanie Boddie is one of the fellows and our theme this year is fostering student well-being. Stephanie and I were the first to present our experiment ideas this year. Mine was very focused on what we could do for the students. And Stephanie's was very focused on how we could teach the students to do for themselves. It was so deep and so fascinating, and it will improve my experiment for sure, learning from her. But I just loved that immediate realization of we can do something for them for a semester, but the most powerful thing we can do for them is to teach them how to do for themselves. I’m excited to see how that works out.

LP: I’ll go next. We had Joel, and I cannot remember his last name. Holly, he was in your cohort. Do you remember Joel's last name?

HC: Weaver.

LP: Yes, Joel Weaver. He usually led study abroad, but because of pandemic, he couldn't really take the students, they couldn't travel. So he used these virtual...he did a virtual study abroad to Pompeii, using these glasses. Kind of, you know, because I didn't get to touch them, you know, we were virtual. So it was a zoom and he was showing us and talking about it. But because I teach study abroad, it was so interesting to me that he could teach a whole a broad class with these virtual glasses to Pompeii. That was probably the most interesting teaching strategy.

HC: In my group of my senior fellow year, both Leigh Greathouse and Michael Scullin, we're working with students, they both have labs. And it was impressive to me just in general, how their students were professional lab workers, not just undergraduate students, but in particular Leigh’s project. It made me chuckle a little bit because I guess I'm sometimes a little immature, but she works on colon health. There were just lots of puns about poo. Her students needed to convince other people to take samples from themselves. They just came up with this super creative video. And I think they engaged our film and digital media department helping them make a movie. Oh, I can't remember what the name of it was, but it was based on Back to the Future. It was just this really funny video that showed that collecting a poo sample was nothing to be afraid of. I thought it was really cool having this extremely professional aspect of dedicated lab work, real science, like I said, contributing to colon health, contributing to preventing colon cancer. And then at the same time, engaging the creativity and even the silly nature of all of us with the whole poo focus.
CR: By the way, if you live long enough, the doctor is going to ask you to do at some point in your life. That's great. Did you have any thoughts, Chris?

CM: It was so long ago for me, it really was. One thing that sticks out though—we've talked a lot about study abroad and we've talked a lot. This was someone in the language program who their project was a combination of the language and study abroad. I think it was to France actually. It was to go through museums and there were a lot of collecting of different cultural tropes and bringing those together and taking those ideas, and then forming some critical how cultures interact. That really spoke to me a lot. I've done a lot of travel, I've done a lot of study abroad, I've done a lot of different things. I've never really thought about how important it is to embrace, not just to be part of the culture, not just to go to be in the culture, but to embrace it and to try to understand where does it come from? That was what that project was about. That stuck with me.

CR: Yeah. Well, I think I'll use Nadine's comments about Stephanie Boddie’s work as a transition to the last question that I have for you all. The idea helping our students to learn, thinking about their long-term practices and habits and things like that, I think translates very well to the work that we do. At least the way that I approach it here at the ATL, is we want, of course, our students to have great experiences in the classroom. But we want them to be set up for a trajectory of success. And a trajectory of learning and curiosity and critical thinking, all those kinds of things. And the same is true for what we do with faculty, right? We want you all to have great experiences when you come to workshops, when you are involved in cohorts, or when you're in a fellows program or something like that. But what really matters to us is that we are helping you craft a trajectory of ongoing development in your teaching. And ongoing curiosity and critical thinking about your own teaching and ongoing experimentation too. Hopefully this Baylor fellows experience demystifies the whole notion of trying new things, right? You break the seal on that a little bit, if you're not used to doing it. I want to ask you all how has this experience shaped your long-term approach to teaching? Have you seen it already in a trajectory in your pedagogy?

CM: I would definitely say that the experience with the fellows and then especially as senior fellow has pushed me to embrace change. I can't think of a semester from the time that I was a fellow until now that I haven't changed my class. And some of them have been dramatic changes. What the fellows program at ATL helped me to understand is it's never going to be perfect. It's always going to need to change. It's always going to need to evolve, and so embrace it. And be okay with maybe this will work, maybe this won't work. Maybe we need to do some tweaking. Maybe we need to do an overhaul. And I really think that sitting in a room with people that are willing to put their class on the line, essentially. And that's what you do when you make enormous change, like we do in the experiments, you're putting your class on the line. Sitting there with people that are willing to do that and willing to talk about it and willing to take that chance has really helped me to embrace that. This is now something that I do every semester. Every semester is different because of the fellows.

HC: I think that the idea you've got there about change and evolution is incredibly important because of course one, we're never perfect. So we can always improve. But also our student body is always changing, right? We keep getting older, but our students are the same age, yet they have different personalities each generation. Each group has a different personality. One thing that I was able to take from the Fellows program was to seek out ways to meet the new groups of students where they are, instead of trying to force them into my older molds of how to do things. So I want to give a big shout out to the Office of Engaged Learning, the undergraduate research. Because after my senior fellow's year, thinking about what can I do to connect my students who largely are double majors in French? It's French and Chemistry. French and Biochem. French and Business. French, and whatever. How can I make 19th century French literature useful to them in what they're doing for their career? Right? Not just this thing that they're studying, because they want to get a French major, but how is this class going to be useful to them? I reached out to the Office of Engaged Learning and was able to get a grant from them to support a
professional development workshop with my students, where I taught them how to write abstracts for conference purposes. Whether they wanted to do a humanities abstract, a social science abstract, business. Actually invited some of my colleagues from the fellows program to present at that workshop. And then had 12 students present at URSA, our undergraduate research conference in the spring. It was a little daunting to have 12 students do that, but they did that. And one student actually was fully funded to go to a social science conference in Arizona through that program. Learning from the fellows, how to make what I'm teaching not only accessible but useful to the students. And also how to use resources around campus to help either fund that or support it or encourage it.

CR: That’s great.

NW: It can be, it is overwhelming. We all, as professors, faculty have different demands on us, whether it be administratively or research demands and teaching. A lot of times we default, I think it's human nature. We have a course developed. We know the learner is different. We know we could do something better. But we've developed this course and it's where we can go ahead and just walk in on Tuesday, Thursday and teach what we've taught before. But I think one thing that the Fellows program has really taught me is don't let it be overwhelming. Don't think you have to revamp everything you're doing. It's like when you start with a New Year's resolution and they say, oh, don't try to take all of your bad habits out at once, just choose one. So the theme really helped me, it really helped me to focus on this one theme. Let me work on this and research it well and know what works and what doesn't work. Read articles about it and improve in that area. Okay, check. I feel like I'm better there. Now this year I'm focused on another area. That's one of the things that I think I'll bring forward forevermore is what do I want to work on this year? How can I change this to make what could be very overwhelming, let's revamp for the new learner, to let's take one step at a time and start to infiltrate that idea into my other courses.

CR: Wonderful insight. Yeah, thanks. And Lyn, do you want the final word?

LP: Well, sure, I'll say that I think in my being in the senior fellow cohort, because we had just come through the pandemic or we're still really in it, we had so many different teaching strategies that these brilliant faculty in that cohort had devised, were using and were sharing with us. I mean, you know, in nursing we typically have a system of how we teach, you know, we're in the hospital, we're in the classroom. And I think one of the biggest benefits for me was to see these different modalities of teaching that, you know, I had never even thought of using. I didn't even know what a [inaudible] was, but, you know, we had a great presentation by one of our faculty with that. And then I was able to learn it and use it at one of the conferences where I was presenting after that. So I think just the amount of different strategies that we got to see actually, you know, used with these passionate faculty who loved doing it. So I think that that was probably one of the biggest benefits for me.

CR: That's great. Yeah, thanks. Well, Holly had to remind us that we're all getting older while our students stay the same age. But you all are aging like fine wine. So I appreciate your time. Chris, Holly, Lyn, Nadine. Thank you for joining the show today and sharing your experiences with us.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you, Dr. Richmann.

CR: Our thanks again to Nadine Welch, Holly Collins, Lyn Prater, and Chris Meyer for joining the show today. If you want to learn more about the Baylor Fellows program and see which faculty have been involved through the years, you'll find a link to our Baylor Fellows webpage in the show notes. Thanks for listening, and as always, you can support the show by subscribing and giving us a Five-star review in Apple podcasts. That’s our show. Join us next time for “Professors Talk Pedagogy.”