

Brae Foust: Hey, howdy, hey, folks. Welcome back to the I Am WT podcast. I'm your host, Brae Foust along with the Queen Bee of I Am WT, Tearanee' Lockhart. How you doing, T?

Tearanee' Lockh...: Good morning, y'all. I'm doing great. It's been chill. I'm ready for it to be over. I'm ready for school to be done.

Brae Foust: I don't know if y'all know this, but we're recording this in the middle of April now. And April's pretty stressful for us students here. Finals are starting to come up, projects' due dates are coming up. We are very worn out. If you can't tell from my voice, I'm definitely worn out. T, how are you feeling?

Tearanee' Lockh...: Yeah. I have so much due. I'm taking a screenwriting class, so I have to finish my screenplay that's due this week. And then I have finals and tests. And I've had three tests this week, and I'm like, "Okay, it's fine. We're almost to the end."

Brae Foust: Brittany Lee, how are you feeling?

Brittany Lee: I'm doing good. I am also. It's April. It's busy. Yeah. Working on some fun projects, but I'm with you. The go time before summer break, and it's like this big energy right before school lets out. So...

Brae Foust: Yeah. But I'm good. I'm good. I'm glad to be here.

Brae Foust: Yep. If you can't tell, that is Brittany Lee, our guest for today. You're a little nervous about the podcast a little bit, but how are you feeling right now after a minute of talking?

Brittany Lee: I'm good. This is good. This is my first podcast, so I'm just excited to be here and have a good conversation with you guys.

Tearanee' Lockh...: Well, tell us a little bit about yourself.

Brittany Lee: Yeah, so I'm Brittany Lee. I work right now in the Office of Philanthropy and External Relations. I am the director of annual giving for the university. I have been, actually, a part of working at the university since I came here in 2011. So I started here in 2011, I got my first full-time job at WT in 2014, so coming up on nine years of being here. So...

Tearanee' Lockh...: Wow.

Brae Foust: Mm-hmm.

Tearanee' Lockh...: I love this place, obviously. Not planning on leaving. I live in Canyon. I am married. My husband's name is Tucker. I have a 10-month-old named Griffin. So this whole work and becoming a mom thing... I feel like I'm a new person this year since I've had a baby. So it's been great. And then I have a little cockapoo

named Oliver. I can't not mention him, our little dog's part of our family. So yeah, that's a little bit about me.

I grew up in Friona, mainly. My dad is a football coach, so we lived a few places, but Fiona's where I graduated. Shout out, cheeseburger capital of Texas, if you didn't know. I always throw that in there. So I left Friona, came to WT in 2011. WT was actually the only place I applied to come to college. My sister was here, she loved it. I met her friends, and I was like, this is where I want to be. So... 2011 and now here. So it's good. It's been over 10 years since I've been a part of this university, and I obviously really love it.

Brae Foust: Were you part of any sororities by chance at WT?

Brittany Lee: Yes. So I am a Delta Zeta. I pledged my freshman year, went through formal recruitment, did that whole thing, loved it. I immediately jumped in, was the secretary, and then moved to new member education and then also was VP of membership. So I loved it. I cannot imagine my college career and time at WT without it. Just the group of women who supported each other. And we had fun together, we went through challenging times together, we were just growing up and figuring out our lives. So yes, I was in Delta Zeta. I loved it.

I was also a peer leader. Loved that. That's one of my favorite things I did while I was on campus. I guess for those of you who don't know, we run new student orientations. So that was so much fun. It was two summers of really hard work but equally as fun play and getting to know all of the freshmen coming in to WT. And then I was actually also in the first cohort of what is now Rogers' Lead. At the time it was Lead WT. That was before the Rogers came in, a great family, and helped support the program. So all of those things, those were kind of the three big things that I did that completely influenced my time at WT and who I ultimately graduated and became. So yeah, a little bit about me.

Tearanee' Lockh...: Yeah. So it seems like you really loved serving the WT community. What was your favorite part of being a peer leader or in Delta Z, all those?

Brittany Lee: Oh man, there's so many things, fun memories. Cheerleading, though, was just so much professional goofiness. I don't even know how else to describe it. We had the best time. So before new student orientation, we went through about two weeks of immersive training. We made videos, we did goofy skits, we did all of the things. Every week, we did bonding the night before an NSO, we did scavenger hunts, we went to see Texas together.

We just got to be goofy college students, but then also get to also make an impact on students coming in. And I think that is the biggest thing from Lead WT to Delta Zeta, peer leading, all had that sort of mentorship aspect. And I loved getting to do that, meet new people coming in and then just help them find what they loved about WT and helped them get involved. So many funny stories and time together. But it was great. We also lived in the residence halls while

we were peer leaders. I don't know if it's still the same way, but we had so many fun times hanging out back in the residence halls with all the students, so it was good. It was a great experience for sure.

Brae Foust: Speaking of students, what would you say your best advice to those students would be? Coming in, growing up, what would you say that your best advice to give them?

Brittany Lee: There's kind of two things. The first thing I would say is, obviously from my experience, get involved, because I just cannot imagine coming to WT and not finding the group of people and place and structure around you to ultimately dive in and immerse yourself into the WT spirit. I think that made the biggest difference for me, getting involved. And so any student that's on campus, find what you love and what you're passionate about and meet people and get involved. Because that ultimately is going to change your experience like crazy. So I would definitely say get involved.

And then I would also say, enjoy your time here. I had some dual credit hours, so I graduated in three and a half years. When you're a senior, you're like, "I got to get out. I got to get out." But enjoy it, because as great it is, as it is being an adult and being out in the real world, I cherish so many memories and friendships and things that I got to do. Enjoy your time here and have fun would be my advice.

Tearanee' Lockh...: I definitely understand that, because as a senior, I'm like, "Okay, I'm ready to go, I'm ready to go." And then now I'm itching to just find a way to get to stay in the WT community.

Brittany Lee: And that's what I did. I mean, I got an internship at the Enterprise Center, which is a division of the College of Business, so it's on Northwestern. But I found an internship there and then was like, "Okay, how can I stay here?" And then ultimately found a job, and you keep in the community of WT. And that's what I did. I was the same way. I was like, "Okay, I'm going to graduate, but I'm not really ready to give it up.

Tearanee' Lockh...: Well, speaking of the Enterprise Center, so you worked with them and then you've worked with the Alumni Association, and now you work with the Office of Philanthropy. So how are those experiences, and why did you choose to continue to work at WT after you graduated?

Brittany Lee: I obviously loved WT, I loved the culture. Like I said, I didn't want to leave. Enterprise Center was a surprising route for me, honestly, because I was an AD PR major. You are, too, right?

Tearanee' Lockh...: Yes.

Brittany Lee: So I was like, okay, what marketing job, what PR job can I find? But when I got my internship at the Enterprise Center, I was like, "Oh, this is a fun way to utilize my degree in a way that I hadn't really thought of." So the Enterprise Center, we helped entrepreneurs and businesses either grow, start businesses, so programming around all of that. And my first job in was client services. So that was something that I never really thought about, but it was the perfect foot in the door.

I learned all these PR advertising skills. But what I really needed immediately was time management, scheduling, kind of those basic things that helped build the foundation of my career. And from there was marketing, did some programming, but I absolutely loved working there. And like I said, it was kind of a foundation of the things that I got to learn and grow within these different positions that ultimately led me to taking a job at the alumni association with Ronnie. Of course, everyone knows Ronnie. Shout out, Ronnie. That's one of my favorite things about working in the alumni association. We couldn't go anywhere without, "Hey, Ronnie."

Tearanee' Lockh...: Yeah.

Brittany Lee: I love that. So he was obviously a great boss, and I got to meet so many people through him. And while I was at the Alumni Association, I started doing a little bit of our appeals and getting membership and raising funds for the alumni association. And so that's kind of where I started this like, "Oh, I really like this fundraising piece," which has now led me to the Office of Philanthropy and External Relations and annual giving and to just kind of grow in that and develop as a fundraising professional. So that's where I'm at now and I love it.

Brae Foust: Sounds like you do, for sure.

Brittany Lee: Yeah. Yeah.

Brae Foust: I think I can tell you got the biggest smile right now, talking about this. I could tell you're very passionate about-

Brittany Lee: Oh, thank you.

Brae Foust: ... all the places you work. Speaking of Enterprise, is there a specific project or something that just clings to your mind and something that you just will never forget for the rest of your life, working for Enterprise?

Brittany Lee: I got to run the Emeril Enterprise Challenge, and for those of you who aren't familiar with that program, it is a partnership with the Enterprise Center and also the Emeril Economic Development Corporation. And they give \$500,000 to business owners. So I got to run that program from start to finish. So application process... It's a very specific type of company that can apply for these funds. So vetting all of those. It's a competition, so you submit things along the way, and

then ultimately, your business plan is the big piece. And so they're doing coaching and training along the way to submit this business plan at the end.

And we did a full kind of Shark Tank thing. So you pitch your business in front of five judges, and then ultimately, the judges decide how they're going to split up the \$500,000. So you couldn't get more than a hundred thousand dollars per company. And then at the end, it was a big celebration. We got to publicly announce with the big checks and the full thing. So I loved that program that will always be with me. And I learned a ton just from that program, managing it, running it, marketing. It was just a full thing. But I loved that program.

Brae Foust: Love that story. Yeah. Well, real quick, we're going to take a quick break. When we come back, we're going to be discussing a little bit of the WT annual fund as well as the I Am W T giving campaign and maybe a little bit of a silly story along the way. Be sure to stay tuned. We'll be right back with more I Am WT.

Speaker 4: Donors to West Texas A & M University give more than their material support. They devote time, expertise, and commitment. WT would not be what it is today without individuals dedicated to our forward progress.

Brae Foust: Welcome back to the I Am WT podcast. I am Brae Foust, along with Tearanee' Lockhart and our guest of the hour, Brittany Lee. So we wanted to discuss, just getting it back into the show, what is your favorite memory or funny story that has to do with WT? You don't have to be a student, you can have been working for them or anything like that. What is your favorite memory or funny story?

Brittany Lee: Funny story. And I don't know if people will find this as funny as I did, but I was a peer leader and I had this really good friend Will, and we were peer leaders together. And I thought it would be so funny to give my whole NSO group, which was about 25 people, his phone number. And we were going to text bomb him all day, just text some random things like make his phone blow up in silence and all the things. Well, he was like, "Okay, funny, Brittany. I'm going to do this to you and I'm going to do this 15 times harder." To the point, he gave, I'm pretty sure, about 100 students my phone number. And constantly, "Ding, ding, ding." Like my phone shut down for half of a day, because I was flooded with these random, "Period, space bar." Text messages. I mean... Dead. So I just love that. Shout out, Will. He's so funny. I don't know why that memory sticks out in my head, but I just, all day, could not use my phone, because I had thousands-

Tearanee' Lockh...: You just kept getting your texts blown up to your phone...

Brittany Lee: Blown up, blown up. I was like, "I'm sorry. I will never do that again. Please-"

Tearanee' Lockh...: "I learned my lesson. Please..."

Brittany Lee: "Please do not ever give anyone my phone number again."

Brae Foust: Will, if you ever find my number, don't do that to me, please. I beg of you, my man.

Tearanee' Lockh...: So going back a little bit.... I know you said, you mentioned that you were married and you had a child. Did you meet your husband here at WT?

Brittany Lee: So I did meet him at WT. He was here. He's a little bit older than I am. So we weren't actually in college together, but he was the same. Student body president, was in a fraternity. I mean, he just was the same, kind of lived WT. He was just around, my sister knew him through some WT things, and we had mutual friends. So ultimately, I don't think we would... I mean, maybe we would've found each other another way, but WT definitely kind of was the connecting point for us. And we still do all things WT, go to the football games and are very much still a part of the WT community, which is really fun. So...

Tearanee' Lockh...: Yeah. We have multiple guests who have been like, "Oh yeah, I met my partner at WT, I met my husband at WT." So...

Brittany Lee: Yeah, I love that.

Tearanee' Lockh...: I love hearing those stories.

Brittany Lee: Yeah, absolutely.

Brae Foust: What's your favorite thing about your husband?

Brittany Lee: Oh, man.

Brae Foust: I'll put you on spot, right here. What's your favorite thing about him?

Brittany Lee: He is just the most supportive human. No matter what I do, he is always there, being my biggest cheerleader. And then now, to see him as a dad, you're like, "Oh, I don't think I could love a person anymore." And then you see them become a dad. And he's been like... I'm going to get emotional. But he's just the best partner that I could ask for as a husband and a father. So it's so fun watching him. He's always been goofy, but he has this dry sense of humor, which I also love. But now, as a dad, he's like this goofy guy who sings all the time and does anything he can to make our son laugh. So he's great.

Brae Foust: Have you been talking to my wife? Cause that's exactly what she said about me and our son. It's such a sweetheart.

Brittany Lee: It's so important.

Brae Foust: It really is.

Brittany Lee: To find those people that you love and then are going to be a great husband, but also a good father and be able to set that example for them and be a big cheerleader for you. So yeah, absolutely. I could not be where I am or doing this without his support and his love. So... Love you, Tucker.

Brae Foust: All right. We got to get back to work, though. The important stuff.

Brittany Lee: The important stuff.

Brae Foust: We brought you along. We wanted to discuss a little bit about the WT Annual Fund.

Brittany Lee: Yeah.

Brae Foust: Can you go into a little detail about what that all entails?

Brittany Lee: Yeah. So the annual fund is a source of funding for the university that's unrestricted, funds that allows the university to do certain programs and say yes to things that help innovative programs, scholarships, student programs, study abroad, things like that. And also to describe it, it is funds under \$25,000. So anything above that would be a major gift, but it's also cultivating and a foundation for developing donors that could eventually, one day, become major donors. So lots of different things, but the funding can go to a lot of different things on campus, kind of highest priorities, greatest needs. It allows the university to be like, "Okay, yes, we can do that innovative program. We can help these specific priorities across campus." That's a little bit about that.

And then what we're working on right now.. So I Am WT has always been our internal giving campaign brand. And one thing that we're going to do this year, which is really exciting, a little teaser... We are going to take that I Am WT brand and make it a brand for all of annual giving. It's going to be like, I Am WT Alumni, I Am WT Faculty Staff, I Am WT Leaving a Legacy, which is our planned giving section of fundraising. So I'm really excited about that. And I think I Am WT, no matter if you're a faculty staff, if you're a student, if you're a friend of the university, once you're in the university and you're a part of the community, you feel like you're a part of something. And so I think I Am WT is just a good brand that is kind of all encompassing for no matter where you are in your journey with WT.

So we're really excited about that. We're going to launch social media pages for it, we're going to have video and student testimonials and donor spotlights. And obviously, a part of this podcast as well, I Am WT podcast...

Brae Foust: Yeah.

Brittany Lee: That fits in as well. So it's all going to be kind of under this umbrella of I Am WT for annual giving. So I'm really excited about that.

Brae Foust: I was wondering why our name was I Am WT. Actually, no, I'm kidding. I knew what, no.

Group: [inaudible 00:17:43].

Tearanee' Lockh...: So why do you support WT, and why should other people support WT?

Brittany Lee: WT, for me... I've talked about my experiences and my memories. It's given so much to me, and I really do not think I would be the same person without it. So to me, I feel like I'm giving back to something that helped me grow professionally, personally. And I know that the dollars that I'm giving back to the university are making an impact. And I think that's great about WT, you can give to where you're passionate about.

We're in the middle of this comprehensive campaign One West. And that's the thing. Where do you see your passions, your priorities? And the donor gets to choose that. So I know that when I support WT, I'm going to be making an impact, in students' lives, in the people that come here to work every day, the community that it supports. And I think that everyone, of course, should support WT. But WT is such a pillar in Canyon and Amarillo, and it's creating such economic development and growth in the area. And I think the more that the community pours into the students and the place, they're going to want to stay here and they want to build their lives here and find careers here. And ultimately, that's just adding to the economic growth and the development of the region. So obviously, WT is doing a ton for students and faculty and staff, and of course, I think everyone should get involved with that.

Tearanee' Lockh...: I feel like WT has created so many leaders in the Amarillo community.

Brittany Lee: Yes.

Tearanee' Lockh...: It's just produced so many workers.

Brittany Lee: Yes.

Tearanee' Lockh...: And so supporting WT is just supporting the community.

Brittany Lee: Exactly.

Brae Foust: Exactly.

Brittany Lee: Exactly. And I think, just like you sitting here today, you're doing real-world things. And that's one thing I tell people all the time. WT laid the foundation, and the professors, they expected a lot from you. You learned real-world skills, soft skills, hard skills, all of these things that absolutely prepare leaders, and they go into the workforce in the community and they make a big difference.

Brae Foust: We always ask this one question to every one of our guests, "What exactly does WT mean to you?" You could have given, or you could have worked for any other school, any other university. You could have gone to Lubbock for Texas Tech, you could have gone all the way to the actual Texas A & M school. What does it mean to be able to do what you do for WT? And what does it personally mean to you?

Brittany Lee: WT means the world to me. And I've said this already, but I just don't think that, where I am today, it couldn't have happened without WT, being here and working here. I just love the culture and the spirit and the pride that everyone has in coming to work here every day. And I love being a part of that culture. And with the faculty staff,

I love that everyone pours into students and they want to see students succeed. And one thing I always told people when I was coming to school here, a lot of friends that went to D1 schools and all across. And they were like, "Why WT? Why did you decide to go there?" And ultimately, when I came to school here, I was not a number. I knew the professors. The professors knew me, I knew my classmates. It was this sense of family and belonging that I knew I wouldn't have gotten at a different university. And so for me, I loved that while I was a student, and I've gotten to experience that as a full-time staff member as well. So it's kept me here, and I look forward to seeing it grow and change. And it's already changed so much since I was in school. So I love it. And I think it's doing an amazing thing for so many students and the lives in this community.

Brae Foust: For sure. Well, Brittany, I have absolutely enjoyed our time talking with you. Tearanee', have you enjoyed it as well?

Brittany Lee: Thank you. I love being here.

Tearanee' Lockh...: Yes. I just love hearing the passion that you have for WT.

Brittany Lee: Oh, thank you.

Tearanee' Lockh...: And I love knowing that you wanted to support the community and you're doing what you're saying.

Brittany Lee: Thank you.

Tearanee' Lockh...: And you're ensuring that students still get to go here-

Brittany Lee: Okay.

Brae Foust: Yeah. Absolutely.

Tearanee' Lockh...: ... and love their campus life.

Brittany Lee: Thank you. Thank you.

Brae Foust: It's such a blast.

Brittany Lee: And congratulations to you guys. This is so cool.

Tearanee' Lockh...: Oh, thank you.

Brittany Lee: I love that you guys get to do this.

Brae Foust: It's such a blast. To actually get paid to do stuff like this. It's such a blast.

Brittany Lee: Yeah, absolutely.

Brae Foust: Before we get out of here, do you want to give a quick shout out to your family and say hi?

Brittany Lee: Yeah. Hey, everyone, Tucker, mom, dad, Brooke, my sister. Love you guys. Griffin. Oliver, you won't hear this, but it's fine.

Brae Foust: It'll be on the web forever.

Brittany Lee: Yeah, no pressure.

Tearanee' Lockh...: No pressure.

Brittany Lee: When I say lives on for eternity.

Brae Foust: Well, T, you ready to go?

Tearanee' Lockh...: I am.

Brae Foust: Yeah.

Brittany Lee: Like time for a nap.

Brae Foust: Time for a nap now. All right, folks, thank you guys for listening to our podcast. Make sure to check out the next episode coming up. Thanks for listening. This is I Am WT, and we will see y'all later.