

Hello, and welcome. I am your host, Neil Ward, and I'm grateful that you are taking time out of your day to learn more about design educators' paths to tenure. I truly appreciate it.

On this episode of Tell It To Neil, we're chatting with Assistant Professor of Graphic Design, Kelly Porter, from the East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee. Let's listen in.

Neil: Hi Kelly, how are you?

Kelly: I'm doing very good.

Neil: Thank you for being a guest on Tell It To Neil.

Kelly: Oh, it's my pleasure. I'm excited!

Neil: Yeah, me too! So, how did you get started in Graphic Design?

Kelly: Well I'm sure my story is not completely unique because of course I wanted to be an Art Major and my Dad wanted me to be a Business Major and Graphic Design was some place in the middle that I could still make a living and use my art as I wanted to, so that's kind of how I got into it but once I got into it, I fell in love, so it was really meant to be.

Neil: So it was just that easy, huh?

Kelly: Well, I guess if you want me to go far back it was a little bit more teeth-pulling, a lot more research, a lot more of me sort of begging, groveling and educating him as to what Graphic Design was and honestly, I saw one of my room-mates in College, her sister was older than us and she had taken a couple of Graphic Design classes and I saw one of the projects that they were working on and it just, I don't know, it tickled my fancy when I first saw that one project: it was a mandala project that they'd made so they created one little pie-section of their own art-work and then, you now, transformed it around into a sphere, circle or whatever with the neat pattern and I just thought, man, that is killer: I want to be able to do that kind of thing, you know? So that's how I got into it. And then, I ended up

designing t-shirts for college parties and all kinds of stuff, you know, on the side so I just...I got into it deep!

Neil: So then you went to School for a BFA, correct?

Kelly: I did.

Neil: Where was that at?

Kelly: I actually broke my education up a little bit and I ended up getting my degree from the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg and I graduated in 2004.

Neil: So then you graduated and then you went out into the wide world of work. So, where did you work and what did you do?

Kelly: Well, it wasn't quite that easy either!

Neil: It never is!

Kelly: So, I was living in Mississippi at the time and I honestly thought, oh, I'm going to graduate and go run out and get my job. And I went on about five or six interviews and I got some offers made but they were three-fourths time, no benefits and just, you know, sort of like baby-step job offers that weren't exactly what I was looking for. I was real picky; I needed full time, I wanted benefits, I wanted the whole package. So, what I ended up doing was planning a road trip to the South East Coast from North Carolina down, back down to Mississippi, hitting the major cities in South Carolina, Atlanta and Birmingham and I just called all these agencies; now this was, the internet was around but it wasn't like we all had smart-phones or anything, so looked up all these agencies, called them and said hey, I'm going to be there between, you know, this time and this time on Monday and Tuesday; I'd love to get a portfolio review or whatever and I made a bunch of leave-behind portfolios and had my little briefcase packed full of these leave-behinds. Had probably twenty places set up and I ended up sleeping in my car, getting dressed in road-stops and really just hassling! I had two outfits in my car and I just changed them out, every interview or whatever. And it was a huge learning experience. It taught me to have balls about things and be courageous and fearless and I didn't end up landing a job exactly from that

trip but I settled in a town called Anderson, South Carolina. A friend of mine who'd graduated the year before was working at a newspaper there and she offered to let me use it as a home base while I did second interviews and follow-ups and I got a job working at a print shop and from there I made so many connections and I ended up landing my job at Ryobi Power Tools from there. So it was half my hard-ass work and half, like, making connections and being at the right place at the right time and Ryobi offered me a full-time job, great beginning salary for the time and doing what I wanted to do and I Ryobi was a brand I could get behind with empowerment and do-it-yourself and all that, it was just like synchronous in a way. But of course, but you've heard what I had to go through to get there, so it didn't just land on my lap. That was my first job.

(5:32)

Neil: So, while you're working there at Ryobi, what was the turning-point or the a-ha moment where you thought, you know what? Design education might be for me.

Kelly: You know what, that actually happened in Under-grad. When I was an Under-grad, I took some classes where I was required...I loved color theory and we had two color theory classes, one of them just regular color theory and advanced and I just got bit by a bug after that class and I ended up taking two more independent studies where I was required to fill out my own syllabus and come up with my own project ideas and I loved it. I mean, that was something that was like I guess really integral in me deciding that I wanted to do design education. But at the time, my professors, rightfully so, suggested that I get some real world experience before, so I carry that advice to my students to this day: don't go straight into your graduate degree; always get some experience first so that you can be a more well-rounded teacher with some real industry experience, you know?

Neil: Oh, absolutely. So, you decided that design education was for you in Under-grad and then you were out working at Ryobi and then what prompted you to seek out an MFA degree?

Kelly: I stayed at Ryobi for about three years and then I ended up, it was kind of after Hurricane Katrina happened and I felt this really, a strong desire to get back closer to family. There were some rough patches during Katrina, my family down in Mississippi got shaken a bit and it was, you know, a little bit tough so I wanted to get a little closer to them so I ended up moving back down to Mississippi and I moved to the Mississippi Delta and that's the home of the Blues, the BB King Museum. I worked for a

small agency there called Hammonds & Associates that was a really sweet spot in the middle of nowhere in Greenwood, Mississippi, but they had some of the best clients. I mean, through that experience I got to meet Robert Plant; I got to meet a bunch of famous Blues people, I got to be part of the Mississippi Blues Trail Marker Development, so I mean that was a huge experience for me and it brought me kind of back to my roots again, you know? I was back in Mississippi with a different mind-set. I had...I looked at it with a different perspective after I'd been through Under-grad and then had my first job; I had a little bit more of the critical thinking mind during that point and I guess seeing a lot of the design work that was coming out of the Delta and a lot of the creativity, it just inspired me and it just got me ready. I honestly didn't want to wait as long as I did to go back to Grad School; I ended up waiting almost a decade!

Neil: Oh wow!

Kelly: I set out going, I'm going to get like two or three years of experience and between Ryobi and working in the Delta, it ended up being almost a decade between when I graduated and when I went to Grad School, so yeah, I just, I guess I saw the time-line clicking away and I was like, I'd better get, if I'm going to do this, I'd better do it, so my daughter Cayden, at that time she was old enough to cook her own dinner and do some basic things on her own so I felt, you know, going through Under-grad, she was between one and five years old and that was intense but going through Grad School she was like eleven I think when I first started; I can't remember exactly. I could do the math, but that's not my forte! But she was old enough, you know, I felt like she was a lot more independent and it was the timing was right, so that's when I applied at UT Knoxville.

Neil: So, during your MFA degree, what type of work did you do?

Kelly: Well, coming straight out of the industry and I know you and I have had several conversations about this, but coming straight out of the industry, I had a client-based mind-set. It was , you know, how can I communicate for this entity or for this person or, it was a lot of me putting myself in the shoes of the client or in the shoes of the business and in the shoes of the end-user in a way, and I had to get out of that mind-set and do a little bit...I had to dig a little bit deeper and go a little bit more exploratory, so I think I was really, or we were really blessed, that first semester we started Grad School because we had John Brand who was a mind-breaker!

(10:26)

Neil: Yes, he was!

Kelly: So, he tossed us some hard balls and then in that class and stuff that really made you think and dig deep, you know, some of the projects were like, there was no clear answer: it was all exploration, it was all, you know, what if...well, what if this? Well, what if this? And it was nothing was ever solid, done-deal; it was all open-ended and that was something that...that first year really helped me open my mind up about design. It was like, it doesn't have to be corporate; it doesn't have to be branding; it doesn't have to be just communicating to an audience that's going to end up purchasing or marketing to an audience that's going to end up purchasing your stuff. It was a big, huge, wide, open world outside of just marketing and advertising for Graphic Design. So, that was what Grad School did to me the first year, is helped me realize that the world's a lot bigger place than what I had thought.

Neil: So, then, fast-forward to your thesis project in the MFA program at UT. What was...what did that entail, or what did that look like?

Kelly: So, I drew back in on my roots again because I'd just come off of living in the Delta, so all these...you know, side of the road shops, Mom & Pop shops, they're everywhere in the Delta, they're all over the place; people having a small Blues museum in the back of their house and you just see their home-made signs and it's got me really digging deep into my past and like, why am I so attracted to these signs? What is it about these? It's not like they're amazingly designed signs: they're unique in character but what really is it that drew me into them and I went all the way back to childhood with memories of signs in my grandfather's garage. He had a mechanic garage and he painted his own sign on the outside of his garage and that was something like, I didn't even think about it, that didn't even cross my mind as that was Graphic Design back then, you know, that's like visual communication right there in my grand-daddy's garage. And then my dad ended up, my dad was a traveling tire salesman so I traveled with him on family road trips and I saw these signs all over the place all the time growing up, so there was something deeply rooted in me that was attracted to these and my thesis involved exploring these signs in as far as just straight visual communication: what is it, if you couldn't even read the sign. What was the visual language of the signs? What were the techniques? What were the materials? What was a commonality between them all and I ended up creating these abstract pieces that captured the essence of these signs without delivering a very specific message. It just caught the

feeling of it and since then, actually, and this was something that I learned amazing that I didn't realize to be true until here we are, four years after, five years after graduation, some of our Professors gave us the advice that, whatever you do for your thesis is going to be what you work on for the next five years and so I'm still exploring the signs and what you can learn from these on a much deeper level. I'm actually working on a paper right now about the actual lessons learned from Mom & Pop signs, so it's been proven true that...what you work on that thesis year is going to hold with you for a while.

Neil: Absolutely. I would love to know how that thesis project has translated into your classroom now.

(14:22)

Kelly: OK. It's...it definitely has; I've done a couple of experimental projects with my students. Let me back-track just a second. One of the biggest things that I noticed about the Mom & Pop signage was the level of resourcefulness that there was in their materials and the way they approached the design. A lot of them are designing out of necessity, so they don't have a lot right off the bat: a big, huge budget for amazing design and brand new materials and all this stuff, so they're just kind of like, I've got a need, I need to communicate this. What can I do? And they look around, find the materials; they're problem-solvers and I wanted to induce my students with some of that have-to problem solving. So we were working with the Department of Sustainability on campus and I actually had them come up with this communication campaign to spread the message of eating local, plant-based, organic foods. That was the theme for the semester for the Department of Sustainability. And so they came up with the idea to do a veggie-fair that would go alongside of the farmer's market and the farmer's working was once a week, so it would draw attention to the farmer's market, cause people to linger, come play some games, buy some food, learn about plant-based, local, wise-eating local importer. What are the detrimental things about having your food travel across the country, etcetera, etcetera, so it was kind of an educational thing. But the fair, we had little games, interactive games. Anyway, I'll get to the games in a second. So the kids, they designed these games, concepted ideas for them and made a materials list of the things that they would need from the store. And I didn't tell them weren't going to the store until the day we were supposed to go to the store and we went instead to the campus Surplus, where there's, you know, that's the graveyard for furniture and other un-wanted, unused things on campus. It goes there to be auctioned off or if there's some, you know, person that wants to go over there and try and re-use or recycle something, they're welcome to. So, I took them over there with their lists in hand. They ended up having to translate: OK, I need this big piece of plywood to...where is a flat surface on

any of this furniture that I can use in place of this piece of plywood that I needed. Can I find some hinges? Can I break down this shelf and re-construct it into something else? So, it was like a mad game-show! And they were trying to run around and find materials and figure out what they need. And it turns out, everybody found exactly what they need. We needed to buy some hinges, so I told the Department of Sustainability people: hey, we just need some hinges, and she ended up talking to her Facilities Management people and they had a whole bucketful of hinges that they'd taken off of old doors and saved. So they got us hinges. Anyway, we even got paint from Facility Management, made our own paint colors, so the games were, we had Produce Plinko, you know the old game The Price is Right where you hit the little thing, the little disc down and it lands on certain wins or certain losers...

Neil: Oh yeah.

Kelly: We had Produce Plinko, we have Barn Darts; they built a Cornhole set; we had a Blender Bike that blended up guacamole from avocados...

Neil: Yum!

Kelly: I know! Talk about getting people to linger for some free guacamole. We had a Goofy Golf Course, like a little miniature Goofy Golf Course that people could play. And it was all made out of like shipping crates, cork-boards and stuff and it was really, I mean I think I could see the evidence of that impact of that class on the students who graduated in this past year, that they had me for their Sophomore year and three years later now, you can see it in their work; they're more resourceful, they don't look at things like obstacles any more. They look at them like challenges, like it's something that you can work through it, it's problem solving; it's figuring things out, making stuff work, so I think it definitely has an impact on the students to be kind of forced in a way to work through those scenarios like that, so that is basically how I brought my thesis work into the classroom, to a certain degree. There's a couple of other examples but we could talk for like, three hours about some other stuff, but that's one of the most direct connections.

Neil: And what great lessons you taught them by doing something fun!

Kelly: Yes! Exactly. Plus we wove in some hand-lettering in there too and there was a lot of other side-lessons in that class, construction; basic construction, using power tools. There was lot of little lessons learned.

Neil: It would be great to do that project. I would have loved to have done that!

Kelly: I think about doing it as a workshop sometimes but then I'm like man, the pressure would be on, that would be like a one-week thing, you know. That would be high pressure. But it'd be fun!

Neil: It certainly would. You should definitely do the workshop. So, I just talked about how your thesis applied to your classroom. But, what I didn't ask was between 2013 and 2018, how did you get to where you are right now?

(20:10)

Kelly: So, when we graduated, I kind of missed the timeline for being able to apply for the plethora of jobs that were out there, you know, at the beginning. I was a little late.

Neil: And what timeframe are you talking about?

Kelly: That was in May. In May, because a lot of people were having interviews already in April, March, you know, so we graduated in May and I was just, you know, we were all up to our necks in thesis projects so it'd been hard to do, traveling, interviews and that sort of thing during that time so I started...I had been working on a GTA or a GA, I'm sorry, with the Hodges Library at...UT Knoxville and...

Neil: And what is a GA?

Kelly: The GA, the Graduate Assistantship. I was working in the part of the Library where you could use the computer equipment, you could use the audio equipment, you know, it was a student area; it was basically helping people do homework through audio-visual resources so they offered to let me stay on and work with them part-time, full-time until I got myself settled and I'm telling you, it was probably a week or two after I decided to stay in Knoxville with that Library position that my alma mater contacted me and they were looking for a Visiting Professor and I did a phone interview with them and like an hour

later they called me back and offered me the position, so it was a whirlwind to move from Knoxville down to Mississippi and I stayed at USM, my alma mater where I graduated from with my Bachelor's Degree and taught for a year there and it was a beautiful experience to now be on equal plain with my Professors who knew that I had wanted to go into this over a decade ago; it was really nice, it was great, and I had a wonderful Chair there too: Howard Paine; he's an amazing Chair. He was so supportive of me being a Visiting Professor and helped me, pushed me, ended up giving me a course release one of the semesters so I could do a research project that really catapulted my work with resourcefulness and using materials that were already in existence; I did an installation there my second semester in the Liberal Arts Building that was to do with student success and it was all using the recycled banners, the vinyl banners and I created these hanging mandalas and in the Liberal Art Building. But there we are back to mandalas again! But what I did for that project, I did tabling events and had students answer the question, what is student success to you? That was the big push, the big communication push for the campus was student success but if students are hearing this, student success...well does that even mean? How can you bring that home? How can you take that personal? How can you...how can that really genuinely mean something to you and not just this over-arching statement about, we're all about student success. So, at these tabling events I had students write down, what does student success mean to you? And some of them were deeply personal comments that people made, just getting to class on time or it's getting a B-plus on this paper that I worked real hard on, or there were so many different...I had more than three hundred students, you know, write on the backs of these used vinyl banners and then I ended up de-constructing those and creating the mandalas out of the vinyl banners and then I also created a slide-show of all the individual writings on the back and had that playing on the monitor in the LAB, so you could see, first of all, you participated by writing your thoughts on there; secondly you could see everybody else's thoughts on the monitor of what student success was as they rolled through, and then thirdly, or lastly, you could have the remembrance, every time you saw those mandalas, it would just remind you of what that meant to you, what student success meant to you, so every time you walked through the Liberal Arts Building and saw that installation, it was like a little gentle push, you know, a little thing that made you feel like, OK, I can do this, I've got this. So it was an interesting project and that ties it back to my thesis, resourcefulness, too.

Neil: Absolutely! So, you were a Visiting Professor there, correct?

Kelly: That's right. I taught four classes the first semester and three the second semester because I got that course release to do that research project.

(25:05)

Neil: That's a pretty heavy load.

Kelly: It was pretty heavy. It really was, but I had no service! So...it opens you wide up when you don't have to do any service!

Neil: That does help a lot. So, you were at your alma mater for a year. Now, when did you start looking around because was your next job at East Tennessee?

Kelly: That's correct. And I started looking around; I mean, the minute that jobs started opening up, so even when I first got to USM to work, I had...I joined CAA, I had search engines out for higher education chronicles and I was just feeling out for all these jobs and in a way, since I'd been to UT Knoxville, I'd kind of fallen in love with East Tennessee and so I made a big circle around the Appalachian area in general and those were the places that I really wanted to look and apply, like App State, East Tennessee, West and North Carolina, UNC Asheville; I had a done of Universities that I had my radar pinned on. I was open to work anywhere. I even applied at all the Colleges in Mississippi too. They all happened to be hiring at the same time, so I just...I sent out a ton of applications; probably really hard and heavy starting in the late fall semester, you know? And then I got call-backs and I ended up having four on-campus interviews. I had a couple of more phone-interviews but I had four on-campus interviews and ended up getting four offers!

Neil: Which is amazing to get that many!

Kelly: I know, it was...I felt really, really blessed. But East Tennessee was where I really wanted to be. The other offers weren't in my radar spot so I chose East Tennessee because I love the area. Plus when I visited the campus, I'd been at USM which, that is such a resourceful School. They don't have computer labs; the students buy their own computers. They have one central print area; they don't have a lot of frills, if you can...I don't want to say any negative about them because it's an amazing program, it's such an amazing program; the course curriculums, the teachers that are there are so good; they just don't have a lot of extras. So when I got to East Tennessee State and they have a lot of resources there, I mean, they have four floors that have...and a basement. I mean, they had jewelries

and metal; they had fibers, they had photography, they had print-making; it was just like...I don't know, I felt like I really wanted to jump in that mix! So I did, I jumped in that mix. I'm all up in it now!

Neil: Yes, and I hear that you're starting to put your tenure packet together.

Kelly: I am indeed. I actually got a year negotiated in for my contract so I'm going up for tenure a year earlier than most would on my timeline, but that was just because they took account of my year as a Visiting Professor, so going up now, I just did my third year review this time last year. And that was such an intense process; it was so incredibly intense and so now, going into my tenure, I feel really prepared because I passed my third year review unanimously and I got some really good feedback and now I just have to apply that feedback to my narrative and to my CV and then add what I've done this last year, so I feel like I'm in a pretty good place.

Neil: So, let's talk about that third-year review! What did that consist of?

(29:29)

Kelly: So, for our third-year review, we have to give a twenty minute presentation and we have to write a ten page narrative and then before, like the week before you give your presentation, you have to send the narrative, your CV, your SAI's, which is the Student Feedback Forms that they take at the end of every semester; all of your peer review. We have to do at least one peer review a year and even one a semester if you wanted to and they don't have to all be from in the Department; I've got three of mine from within the Department and one external. I had taught a class and had one of the Professors from Media and Communications to fill out one for me, just to have a little bit of well-rounded different perspective but in the same College, but a different Department and basically they had a week to go over my stuff and then I came in and did my presentation. I had to go by script because twenty minutes, you know, to go over three years' worth of stuff is such a limited amount of time so I wrote out a script and basically sort of read it, you know, and...but it kept me on track and it kept me on...within time and it made sure I didn't leave anything major out. So, and it...the presentation could include visuals, so I could have pictures and videos in my presentation too and just explained it and what I've been doing a lot of that I had to really make clear, it was super-important to make this so clear is, I do research and then I'll bring that research into the classroom, and then the work that's in the classroom, teaching, oftentimes is a service based project, so we're working with a non-profit or a

Campus entity and so I really got this teaching, service, research sandwich going on and I'm touching all three points during...just one class project, so that involves a lot of me working with the non-profit or the campus entity before the semester starts to get things clear and labeled and decided on what the theme or what the project is going to be and then working with the classroom and then at the end of evaluating and follow-through and making sure everything gets done, so...that was something I had to be crystal clear with everybody about because certain things, it seemed as if I could have been counting it twice and that's something that people are sticklers for but in the end the feedback they gave me was, making it even clearer because we want you to get credit for all of this stuff, so even pull it out further, tease it out further and show clearer that it is three different things; mention it in all three areas, even if it is a repeat, because you want to get credit for all of the service you've done, even if you're doing service learning projects in the classroom. That's considered service too. So that was some good feedback. I just, you know, I thought I might have been tiptoeing across the line of trying to get too much credit for what I was doing but they were like...no, tease it out, make it more, be more clear about it. Get the credit for what you've been doing.

Neil: Aside from that third-year review, did you have any mentors helping you up until that point or did you have any mentors helping you to put that third-year review together?

Kelly: We don't have a clear-cut mentor system at ETSU. It's sort of like...I won't say it's a free-for-all, like just fend for yourself kind of situation, but it kind of feels like it a little bit. It's...you have to seek it out. You have to ask the questions. You have to....Nobody's going to spoon-feed it to you there, is what I'm saying. I know I've talked to people who have a very clear mentor program in their first year where they're getting help writing papers and doing...applying for grants and dah-dah-dah-dah-dah and we don't have that. You have to really hassle here. Fortunately, I'm a hustler, so...it kind of fit my personality, I guess, in a way. But anyhow, it's...I'm not saying that anyhow belittle ETSU; it's just a different set-up, it's a different program, so I reached out to our Graphic Design Faculty, I reached out to the Chair of the Department; I reached out to people who I was working with in different departments. Like I said, I've done some collaboration with the Department of Media and Communications and with the Department of Digital Media, so I have reached across boundaries to ask questions and get clarification for anything that I'm concerned about. I had a couple of Faculty members that offered now, when I'm going through my actual tenure review, to offer to look at my stuff before I submit it and make sure everything looks great so people here are super-willing to help; you just have to reach out to them, you can't sit back in your office and be like, nobody's helping me.

You have to seek it out. So that's some advice I'd give anybody who was going through the process that didn't have a clear-cut mentorship type program is: ask. Seek it out.

(35:06)

Neil: Always good advice. Be pro-active.

Kelly: Yes, find your answers!

Neil: So, when you're putting your packet together, do you have separate packets for tenure and a separate packet for promotion, or is it one packet and you get both at once?

Kelly: Ours is together. You go through both at the same time which is awesome for me; I think that's...it makes it very convenient. So you go through tenure and promotion together and basically, I mean you can't speak a hundred per cent for everybody but the historical record is, if you get tenure, you get promotion at ETSU. So, we'll see. I'm hoping for the best!

Neil: We'll cross our fingers for you!

Kelly: Thank you, thank you! Any good vibes, any positive affirmations, I completely accept! I'm really wide open for positivity at this point!

Neil: So, when you've been talking about your scholarship to your colleagues, and you mentioned this already a little bit from your third year review. Do you get the sense that they understand what you're doing in terms of scholarship and research or has it kind of fallen on deaf ears?

Kelly: Well, I am lucky to have two other Graphic Design Professors that have a lot of experience: both of my colleagues have been there for twenty plus years, so in essence, they have carved the way. They've carved the way for Graphic Design to...for it to be seen as acceptable research to do Fine Art or to do freelance stuff or to write papers or to do presentations, so honestly, all those paths have been trudging before me. So I feel like I'm not having to do too much defense of freelance work or too much defense of...now the people within my Department are on my team; they all understand. I've yet to see what feedback I'll get when it goes to the Committee, the University Committee, that could be a

different story. So, I have to do a good job in explaining professional development or this is professional activities. Plus entering your professional activities into the UCDA Competition, or the ADDIES or you know, any number of design competitions, just to validate that yeah, this is pretty good stuff, you know, any of that kind of stuff on top of the fact that you're working. To me it's like it's more...it's cherries and icing on the cake, you know?

Neil: You'll definitely have to listen to Gary Rozanc; I believe he was Episode Three, but he talks about how to craft a narrative.

Kelly: You need to give me the sneak-preview of that one! Because I've got to turn my documents in in September, and this isn't coming live to August: I can't wait that long!

Neil: So, do you have any other advice for those that are just starting in a tenure track position? Do you have any advice for them on what to do kind pre-emptively before a third year review or before their tenure year?

Kelly: Well, it was given as advice to me too is to keep everything; every little piece of paper, every document that shows that you were a part of something; every photograph. Just keep everything. So, basically, if you just start a file or a box or something that you can put all your name-tags from conferences in, all your show-cards; anything that you've been a part of: keep it, because your memory grows short over three years and you might not be able to go back through all of your emails and remember every last little thing that you helped with or participated with. Even with service. Service, there's no documentation a lot of times for service, so make sure that you keep some kind of record of everything that you've been a part of, just so you get full credit for everything you do. And for me, the first year went by so quickly that...and I was so neck-deep in teaching because I had to basically construct two new classes that first year I was there, so I felt a little over-whelmed and I didn't get enough research stuff done. Plus I had a new Faculty show that I had to do and those new Faculty shows don't...I mean, yes, it's a show on your CV but it's not like it's peer reviewed; it's whatever you decide to put in that show, you curate your own show of your own work. So that...those things at the beginning of your first year can drain you and so you have to make sure that you're at least putting yourself out there in one way or another, entering a show, designing something that can be submitted for an ADDIE or for some kind of competition. Doing something on the side, just to keep your research up because service and teaching drained me my first year and I felt like I've spent my last two years

catching up on research, so that's advice I would give is try to do something, anything, towards research during your first year, whatever you can.

(40:40)

Neil: So, that phrase, peer review, is something that I've heard a lot about and it's a phrase that catches my ear a lot as well. So, what does peer review mean at ETSU?

Kelly: Peer Review at ETSU means that your work, whatever that may be, it could be photography...at ETSU, it could be anything, any fine art, any design work any written work, any type of abstract for a presentation, has gone before a body of individuals who in one way or another are...who have some authority on the subject and can pick and choose which pieces make it in or out and if your piece gets selected in or is juried in or peer reviewed into whatever competition or conference, then that means you've met the standard that your work is up to par and it's just a validation that you're work is on-point. So, peer reviewed, you can do a ton of work and then that looks good that you've been busy and that you've been doing stuff, but it looks way better and is definitely counted heavier on your CV if it's been through the peer review process; that's the big thing. If it's been peer reviewed, then people will look at it and be like, oh, awesome, awesome, great, that's awesome, whatever it is.

Neil: And where have you found those opportunities at?

Kelly: For peer review stuff?

Neil: Yep.

Kelly: UCDA has been huge for me. It was the first time I ever presented; it was the first time I've ever done a poster, that education summit which I'll put a shameless plug in right here, the 2019 UCDA Design Educators' conference is in Johnson City this year, in 2019. The theme is collaboration. Please submit...UCDA, it was huge for me, it was like the big turning point where I was like, wow, this is great, this is a body of my peers because one thing I felt that Graphic Design educators were at a disadvantage because we're dealing with competition on a great scale. A huge scale, competing with professional, multi-million dollar budgets and when we put our little poster design or whatever in with somebody who's doing a huge campaign for like, Toyota, then ours looks like it's not stacking up. But

when you put our work up against our peers' work, our true peers, other design educators, then that's where you really have a chance to shine, you know? So it makes you...and plus the fees for UCDA are more affordable. To enter one thing into one of the bigger publications of the bigger design magazines is like hitting up close to a hundred dollars. What Design Educator can afford those kind of entry fees on our salaries? I'm sorry, but it's the truth, you know? When you're having to foot the bill for your own peer review and it's like a fifty-fifty shot whether you can get in because you're competing with professional companies, adding up eighty dollars, ninety dollars each entry, that's hitting hard on your bank account, so UCDA did offer me such a great reprieve from the high costs of entry fees and then putting you in a class of people that you're competing with that feel like they're your peers. Also, Pop Culture Association, that was a bit one for me this past year; I presented there. And the beautiful thing about the Pop Culture Association is it's not just Designers. It's other educators, it's anthropologists, it's scientists, it's philosophers: it's a big, wide body of people that are coming together on shared topics, topics that are shared but among different professions, so I got involved in the visual cultures area but I went to some conference talks on AI and yes, it was so fascinating. There was this one that I went to that was called...it was comparing Bladerunner, AI, and it was just an amazing, fascinating conference. Anyway, Pop Culture Association: it's on-point. It's entertaining, you learn a lot, it's not just the same design people. It's really a great conference and then CAA, that's another one. SECAC, that's another good one. And then there's a lot of online opportunities for people, like I got into a photography show in Budapest, Hungary, and that was something that I found online, it was a call for entries for photography work and I didn't have to fly there; the entry fee was reasonable and my work got shown in a gallery international so that was pretty fascinating to be a part of that too, so looking at online calls is a great opportunity put your feelers out there, you know?

(46:13)

Neil: Good advice, definitely good advice. Well, we're kind of rounding out our hour here today.

Kelly: No way!

Neil: I know! So, do you have any parting thoughts or upcoming projects that you'd like to talk about?

Kelly: Well, I think I've already spilled the beans on the UCDA Design Educators' summit, so that's my next big thing is planning and preparation for that coming up. Other than that, I mean, that tenure, that's pretty much my two big soft-balls coming up right now.

Neil: And that's enough.

Kelly: That's plenty! Plus we're going under our NASAD re-accreditation this semester too and I'm on the committee for that too, so...

Neil: Getting that service in! All right, well thank you very much for being our guest here; we got some pretty good gems out of this conversation.

Kelly: It was my pleasure.

Neil: Great, and I hope to see you soon at the next conference.

Kelly: Definitely. Thanks Neil.