

Rise, Teach, Learn - Season 5 Episode 1

Caffeinated Cats

00:02

Hello, and welcome to Rise, Teach, Learn. I am your host, Jamie Gunderson. I am super excited about this episode, particularly because this is the start of our fifth season of RTL. And, this is our first in-person podcast. And, we are diving into the history of podcasting at Chico State with the inaugural faculty podcast called, Caffeinated Cats. So, sitting with me today are Dr. Zach Justus, Dr. Tracy Butts and Mary Wallmark. Can you tell me a little bit about the coffee sitting in front of me?

00:38

Let me take this one. So as part of Caffeinated Cats, we instituted this little ceremony, let's call it, where I would go to the Coffee Grounds on campus, highly recommend them and would choose a drink that somehow very loosely and really only in our imaginations tied to our topic. So I know this was looking back at the history of podcasting. And for us, it was a reunion. And so as is tradition, I'll ask that we all take a drink even though Mr. keto diet over here is having black coffee... mmm, all right, what do you think?

01:28

I was thinking it is loogie free. It is loogie free.

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It doesn't have anything weird in it...

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... for one episode, I don't even remember what we were talking about. But we I think we asked the barista just make us something as a surprise. And so she made this wonderful looking drink, but I think it had condensed milk or something in it. Possibly right, and so it just sat in the coffee when you took a sip you know the condensed milk already has that kind of thick slimy consistency... everyone immediately had this look like Oh, God!

02:16

And there was nowhere in the room to spit.

02:21

Good job well done.

02:23

Yeah, this is a loogie free coffee

02:24

This is a loogie free. This is actually a Havana cappuccino. Because when I was thinking retro for some reason, those old cars in Havana because of the embargo for so long. And I was just telling someone the story that I had friends who went there for Y2K, because they knew nothing could blow up there. And so the Havana cappuccino, is where we're at today, Cheers!

02:47

I love it. Cheers, everyone. Cheers. Yeah. So, I'm interested to know how did Caffeinated Cats come to be? Because when I was reading about y'all, you said something like Zach just sticks to your shoe like gum. And you don't know where you picked it up. But I'm imagining there's like some type of friendship that evolved into this.

03:07

Well, I mean, we've all met and known each other, I think in a wide variety of roles. Mary, I think you and I work together doing the New Student Orientation stuff that Kendra got us together to do that. And Rebecca Buerner, yes. And we were always doing wacky things to try and get the students like, to even just pay attention. I agree. I think one time you had a kayak up on-stage during orientation,

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I may have done a strip show basically, on stage, my mother would be so proud, because I wore every kind of involvement item possible. And then as I told the stories of ways to get involved, I would take those layers off and there was a kayak as well as a paddle. There were a number of things. It's not a proud moment. So, thanks.

04:00

Yeah, so that's where Mary and I knew each other in some of our least sort of formal and I would say most vulnerable moments because I did lots of things to just ...I came out in my full-dress robes from graduation... and I told students that this is how all the faculty dressed all the time. And you know, whatever the full stole and everything.

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While, at the same time you could see you know, from the shin down that he was wearing flip flops
Yeah, nice.

04:31

So that's how Mary and I knew each other and then Tracy, you and I knew each other I think from ...because I was doing a lot of stuff with GE and then there was overlap with, I think that's when you were trying to get the diversity office from campus off the ground when it was just you and \$0. Oh yeah. Good times. And so, you and I knew each other I think from a bunch of GE meetings related to that.

04:56

Okay, because I do feel like I've just, I've just I've always known you all. Yeah, I don't remember.

05:02

Well, I know how I know you, Tracy. She didn't know me. It was more like one way love affair here. They invited Dr. Nikki Giovanni to campus to speak. And my wife and I went to that. And we were like, well, Tracy Butts is clearly the coolest person on earth. Right? Because, yeah.

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So I just, I just have known them.

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Yeah. I think that's fair. Yeah. When I started in faculty development, I was listening to a lot of podcasts to try and be better at the job. So, people talking about higher ed people talking about teaching and learning all sorts of different things. And there's this one podcast that I really love. It's off. It's doesn't exist anymore. But Kevin Kerry from New America was the host. And he and two other folks would get together. And they would, they would always have some alcoholic beverage. And then they would talk about higher ed policy. Oh, nice. And I love that format. And I just thought it was really cool. And I was like, we should do something that is related to our work at the University. And obviously, we're not going to drink on campus, even though there are some days when that seems like it would be really appropriate. And we have loosened up the rules we have loosened. Yeah but not that loose. And so yeah, I message them, I think through social media first, not even through email. And we got together I think, at Mary's office, and chatted, and didn't know what we were doing. I got some interns from my contacts, in what's now media arts to do the recording and post production because none of us knew how to do that piece. And away we went.

06:58

Aside from no tech skills, no experience, and no real knowledge of what we were doing. Other than that, we're fully prepared. Yeah.

07:06

And obviously, you were in charge of the coffee.

07:08

I mean, my job was done. That's a big job.

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I had the great idea. And I think this is really what made it click, to make sure that we always had a student that was there. And sometimes we had a staff member or something as a guest, but it was generally a student. And so, it was generally Mary or Tracy that would find a student from a class or a club or something like that, that we that was related to the topic that we wanted to cover. And that really made it click because I think if it was just the three of us, I would find that entertaining. I'm not sure anybody else would find that that engaging without students.

07:46

I'd turn in. Let me ask this question to you two. What was your favorite moment with a student?

07:51

They were, I think they were all fun for different reasons. I think about when Anna came, I think that was the episode we had to do two takes of. Yes. She had to come back. That was after the election. Yeah. In 2016. Right. Yeah, that's right. Yeah.

08:11

Mary was coming in hot.

08:13

There was a lot of emotion. That's when we did it. And we were like, maybe we don't want to share that. And so, we asked Ana to come back. And she was like, cool, because she wanted to redo what she had said. So, we all wanted a do over. That was fun.

08:32

I don't remember the young man's name that came on when we talked about the racial history of the campus. He-Lo Ramirez. That was my favorite. That, he, I felt educated. That was an episode I did not want to talk. I just wanted to listen the entire time. And he was amazing talking about the history of the Bidwells, of the campus. And I just, I remember leaving that episode, just feeling like, I'm so much better for just having been in the room while he shared what he shared.

09:09

Well, he's a member of the Mechoopda tribe and knows the history. And in fact, his great grandmother is one of the featured previous students in the display in the science building. Oh, wow. So, he's very connected to tribal history, and he dropped a couple of bombs on us. I was like, why don't we jump? Right. And then He-Lo went on? Was it 20 Was it 22, 21? He won outstanding master's thesis that's right for the work that he had done.

09:43

But our topic was actually it has something to do with the history of slavery. Yeah, so we were trying to apply that for the campus community to what does that mean here right, because it's always this other place that it happened. And that's where we decided because He-Lo was the President of the Native American Student Association at the time, and we're like, well, the Native Americans were the people who were enslaved. So, let's go that way with it, which one of these two came up with. And I was like, oh, that's genius. Because trying to make I think the challenge is, you know, again, there are a lot of, of topics that are swirling in the, you know, the world and in the nation related to higher education, but to really bring them like what does that mean at Chico. That's that extra step. And that extra piece that I thought, bringing the student in, and then having those discussions really made it germane to right here, right now, it wasn't just this idea, or this thing we heard about on the news. And so, I thought that was cool.

10:44

We are going through a lot of changes on our campus next week, Zach and I are going to be sitting down with President Perez, and we're going to be talking to him about his vision and his story and how he came to Chico State we want to kind of like theme in the convocation. Like our story, we want

to know more about him. But I want to know more about what your experience was with the transition and hosting the podcast during that time.

11:08

Our campus was going through a lot of turmoil. I mean, I know there are folks who have come within the last few years who recognize that we're really in some churn right now, right? We're trying to seat and sit that new president and stabilize our workforce, because there's always a lot of transition. But on top of that, we've got the transition coming out of COVID. At that time, though, we were having a lot of controversy on campus, because three out of four of our top administrators had gotten a vote of no confidence from the academic senate. And so, we were in a very tumultuous time. And anticipating at that point, okay, we're getting a new president. What is this going to mean? Feeling fearful about it, but also hopeful that this could be somebody who come in and unify us a little bit? And you know, the process is so secretive, for I know all the good reasons and still don't like it. Yeah. Right, because this is where we live. And this is really important to us. So, getting ready for that transition. You know, we're on pins and needles. But I think for me, once we knew who it was coming in, and Gayle Hutchinson was actually the first faculty member I met when I came back on the campus in 1997. Oh wow. So, I knew some things about her and, and had worked with her on some projects and had an idea of her character, and, and how she felt about the institution. So, I was very happy. And I think a lot of people felt that way. I certainly wasn't special or alone in that. But having that transition was a very, I think, for campus, a very hopeful time, there were a lot of people who became really optimistic about our prospects. And it had been very difficult had been very demoralizing, disheartening, and to see the kind of conflict we had and how that turned up for people and how people showed up. And that was disappointing sometimes. And so it was a real transitory experience to be going through, and bringing and seating the new president at that point, because of what had happened in the near history.

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In that particular episode, I do recall that we asked Gayle a wide range of questions about vision for the future of campus about her personally and what it was like to come back and those sort of pieces. The thing that sticks out the most, though, is we always ended the episode with what we call an impossible question. And the impossible question that we asked Gayle was Elon Musk Now remember, this was when Elon Musk was still cool. Elon Musk has launched his Mars colony and there's going to be the first Mars University. He's selected you to be president of Mars University. You can only take five things with you. What are you going to take? And then Tracy held up a sign because we weren't videoing at this point. We were just doing audio recording. And the sign said, don't forget Linda, we didn't want to put we wanted to help her, we wanted to help her. That's when you know.

14:30

When you know what? I remember none of this. Yeah. I'll tell you like there's a difference, in like before COVID and after COVID and a lot of what happened before COVID I'm like wait a minute was I there?... I did that? So. You did that. That was super good.

14:46

Yes. Yeah. We probably did more prep for that episode than we did for any other. Oh, yeah.

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Did you go back and like re-listen to the episodes or you just remember that? I just remember. I say you know not all of us experienced COVID in the same way. I rarely think about memory loss but got that.

15:05

I recall it now that he said it. Although if he had asked me to describe something that happened in that I'd have been like, I don't know, we talked to her. Sure

15:11

And I don't remember whether this was that episode, but the three of us were kind of doing it. And we thought it was cool. And we'd like push it out on our different social media channels. I think we're all mainly on Facebook at that time. But we were not sure how the sort of central administration on campus would feel about that, because we were talking about some touchy issues at a time of, as Mary said, great tumult on campus. And I kind of thought the first time that we heard from somebody in Kendall Hall, it would be somebody saying, "stop doing that and take the episodes off." But instead, we heard from Sean Murphy, in Advancement in Communications. And he was excited about it. And they like, came to one of the episodes, took some pictures, they did a article about it. It was really cool. And that was kind of a moment where I thought, oh, this is okay. People are excited about it, not we're just counting down the days until we get in trouble. We're all getting fired.

16:16

I remember I brought my mom one time. You did! She was the best non-guest. She was number one. Yeah, yeah. Watching us spill the tea, right?

16:26

That is so cool. Did you interview her? Was she the guest? Or was she just an observer?

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She was like, "I don't want to talk. I don't want to talk but I'm just, I'm here."

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She was on the side. But we did, lure a couple of comments out of her.

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Oh, good some nuggets. Yeah, there was a lot of "hmp" over on the side if I remember correctly. Yeah.

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One question I had for you is what happened to Caffeinated Cats? Like, why did it go away? Why don't we have access to that wonderful podcast on campus anymore?

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So, when we started doing this, we were in a particular set of jobs. But then as we were wrapping up, I think you were interim dean and Mary, you had just gone into a new position. But I don't remember what it was. We were sort of all transitioning to different things. And I didn't have the technical support. So, it seemed like the right time to call it rather than, you know, limp it along when we were distracted by challenges and other parts of our professional lives and without the technical acumen to make it what we wanted it to be. So, that's my reason.

17:39

Well, and we did, we did limp along a little bit. Because the last couple of episodes, we set up an iPad, and just did it as a Facebook live and recorded it there, which wasn't, it wasn't good quality. But it wasn't terrible, because we found that we had a couple of people following along the live, because we were kind of doing it at the lunch hour. Yeah. And at that time, you know, again, Facebook was really well used and accessible. But it was, there was also one of those that I accidentally mounted sideways.

When I saved it, so everyone had to tilt their head to watch it. That's classy. I'm sure that didn't make anyone think that the content wasn't top notch. But yeah, so we, you know, we were just trying to get it along. But yeah, there were external factors that were influencing us.

18:32

It's like our baby grew up and went to college. Aww, yeah. But I just think about that episode that we tried to do. Outside of Meriam Library. Oh, yeah, umbrella, and the guy with the leaf blower?

18:51

Cause we were talking about how do we make this accessible to people? And I was like, let's do it. Like a man on the street, kind of a you know, like, we're outside and it's happening live right there. And we could potentially interact with people walking up. May not have anticipated we had a slight breeze that day, which was rattling those things we were freezing our whatnots off out there. And yeah, groundskeeping was going so we're sitting at a table by the Meriam Library screaming at each other. That was a great one. That had to be great to listen to.

19:23

Well, we were we were creative, right? We were willing to try things. So that was nice.

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All right. So, my final question for you all I really just appreciate the time. Do you have any advice for me as a budding podcast host?

19:36

Well, you need to get some merch

19:38

I do need merch!

19:40

I think part of my advice is a little bit of what we talked about earlier, bring a student in Yeah, I would love that. Yeah. Bring a staff member in a program that works with students, right? Same thing with you know, with your career, diversify your coalition but with your podcast, diversify it as well because you'll pick up new audience but you'll also bring a different perspective a perspective that not everybody has the opportunity to get right. Yeah, a lot of your colleagues are not able right now to be involved in these extra things. And so, you can kind of bring them a little bit of a window.

20:12

And you're definitely already doing this. But you know, it's also a great way to bring in other junior faculty, right? To have to talk about the things that that they have or experiencing also helps them with their CV and professional growth and achievement activities. And so, you know, it becomes a win- for everybody.

20:37

And there you have it, folks. Today we chatted with the hosts of Caffeinated Cats, and I'd like to thank our guests for their contributions to this episode. Please don't forget that you can access previous episodes of Rise, Teach, Learn as well as all of the resources associated with this and other episodes through our FDEV podcast web page. A big thank you to you for listening and until next time, we got this Wildcats.

21:01

We would like to thank the Mechoopda on whose traditional lands this recording is taking place. Without their support and continued positive presence in our community we would be unable to afford the cultural and educational work that is at the heart of this recording.