

## Academically Speaking Season 3, Episode 1

Opening:

This is Academically Speaking. A podcast hosted by Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry, Vice Provost and Dean of UCF's College of Undergraduate Studies. It features inspirational stories from the college's faculty, students, and alumni about the transformational power of education.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Welcome to Academically speaking. I am Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry, Vice Provost and Dean of the College of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Central Florida. And I am delighted to be taping today's episode today from the Detroit Lions Training Facility. College of Undergraduate alums Andre George and Ademi Smith are joining me today. So I'm going to tell you a little bit about our guests today, and then we're going to start a wonderful conversation about their experiences. To my right and for our viewers to your left, Andre George is a video assistant for the Detroit Lions one year ago today.

Andre' George:

Yes, ma'am.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

He completed his rookie year with them and he is beginning his second training camp. Congratulations.

Andre' George:

Thank you, ma'am.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Prior to joining the Lions, he served as an operations intern with the Arena Football League team, the Orlando Predators, for two seasons, and was a student video manager at UCF for three years. Immediately after graduating from UCF, he served as a video assistant intern at Florida State University. Andre earned a bachelor's degree in Integrative General Studies with a minor in sports business management from UCF. He's also a veteran of the United States Marine Corps. Andre is from Jacksonville, Florida. Welcome, Andre.

Andre' George:

Thank you, ma'am. Glad to be here.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Happy to have you. Also, joining us today is Ademi Smith. Ademi is entering his fourth season with the Detroit Lions and second as a scout. He originally joined the organization as a scouting assistant in 2020, followed by one season as a personnel assistant. Prior to Detroit, he served as a student video assistant at the University of Central Florida for three seasons. During that time, he also completed scouting internships with the Lions at the 2020 NFL Combine, 2020 East-West Shrine Bowl, and the 2019 training camp. Ademi earned his bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies with a minor in sport business management from UCF. And Ademi is a native of Tampa, Florida.

I can't tell you how excited I am to have these two absolutely wonderful alums join me on the podcast today. So let's get started. We're going to start off with your experiences as students at UCF. And to talk to me first, I'm going to actually start with Andre about why you chose your major in Integrative General Studies.

Andre' George:

Well, when I started at UCF, I was originally pursuing a bachelor's degree in business administration. But after having a conversation with Karen Baxley, one of the academic advisors with the undergraduate studies, I ended up seeing that was a better fit for me and the career that I wanted to pursue because I kind of had an idea of what path I wanted to travel down in the sporting industry. So she recommended that degree program. I did some more research in it, and I felt that was the perfect program for me to pursue to get my bachelor's degree.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So talk to me about what it's like to design your own major, your own degree program.

Andre' George:

It is extremely warming to have that opportunity to be able to create a degree program that benefits you in your career. I did have some business experience or business background from previous jobs that I had worked. So when I got my associate's degree and took all of the business courses that I had received, that gave me opportunity to kind of have the educational steps that I needed to continue going in the business path. But when I wanted to pursue a career in the sporting industry, I was able to format my degree program to the classes that would benefit me in the sporting industry by taking a sport business management minor and then also taking some classes in business that will also be beneficial to me as I move forward in the sporting industry.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. So, Ademi, talk to me about why you chose Interdisciplinary Studies, and how that program allowed you to study across disciplines.

Ademi Smith:

Right. So it's actually funny. My story with IDS began because of Andre. Similar to him, I came into UCF originally as a business student, and I had a good time during my time at the business school. A lot of great professors, learned a ton, but despite having success in the classes, I just didn't feel as though it was my passion. I already knew that I wanted to work in scouting. So there's obviously no degree in NFL scouting you can take.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Right.

Ademi Smith:

So I kind of had tried to just choose business as like, "Something generic. You can apply these principles to anything," but it wasn't fulfilling my passion, I guess. I actually was speaking about Andre with it, and he was like, "Hey, man, you should look into this Interdisciplinary Studies program." I was like, "I never even heard of that. What is that?" So he explained to me, he was like, "Hey, you get the opportunity to

design your own degree essentially. So if you have a unique career goal, you can look at your career goal and figure out, 'What classes can I take to get me close towards that step.' Even if it's not a one traditional degree, you can combine elements from various degrees and get there."

So I spoke with Andre, let's say, it was probably a Monday, that Friday, I had my first appointment at the IDS office with Ms. Cintron, and I spoke with her and I was like, "Hey, I'm considering this." And we looked at my transcript and she was like, "Yeah, you can do this and still graduate on time. And all the sections that you would like to take, you'll actually be able to get into those classes beginning of the next semester." So that day, I filled out all the paperwork and I was in IDS the next semester. But to answer your original question, being able to design your degree is an amazing flexibility. I think for people that have a little bit of a unique career goal, I don't think there's any other program that better suits it.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And I can't say enough about our professional academic advisors, and the kind of support that they provide to our students, and the ways in which they help you to think outside of the box in relationship to the kinds of things that you aspire to do. And our program would not be the success that it has been over the years if it were not for such a dedicated group of professionals. So for both of you, I'm interested to know a little bit about what drew you to sports business. And what's the attraction? What's the thing that turns on that light bulb for you?

Andre' George:

Well, for me, myself personally, growing up, I always played sports, football, basketball, baseball, run track. So it was always a passion in me to be involved with sports. And when I went into the military and got out, I wanted to go back and pursue my degree, and I always wanted to get back into the sporting industry other than being a player. So when I arrived at UCF, that's when I found out about the sports business management minor, and I enrolled into the introduction to sport business management class. And that's where I found all the different elements and other occupational opportunities under the business umbrella for sports. And I was immediately fascinated about that, and I was all in with trying to pursue a career in the sporting industry and took advantage of every opportunity that was available for me to take.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. So, Ademi, what drew you to sports business management?

Ademi Smith:

So like you said, I'm from Tampa, Florida, and everyone in Florida, you grow up playing football.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Or in Texas.

Ademi Smith:

Yeah. Unlike everybody else in Florida, I was not very good at playing football.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I wonder why.

Ademi Smith:

So it's like my decision to go to the business route of sports was more by force than choice. But I say that all jokes aside, I just fell in love with scouting very early. I was probably in middle school, I would follow the draft, get all the magazines, circle who I thought was going to be good, make little scouting reports. So I knew from a young age like, "I really want to find a way to become a scout." And like I mentioned before, there's no real scouting degrees, but UCF has the sports business program. So I guess I was led to sports business just by passion of football, honestly.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. So let's take a little bit of a step back in time for a moment and take some time to reflect on your experience as a student at UCF. Can you share with me any memorable experiences that you had while you were a student?

Andre' George:

One of the most memorable experiences that popped into my mind was when I was working as a student video manager with UCF Football. And my first year working with them that year we went undefeated, and we were the only division one school in the country that went undefeated that year, and we had opportunity to travel to Atlanta, Georgia and playing the Peach Bowl against the Auburn Tigers, which we ended up winning that game and finished that season undefeated. So that was one of the most memorable experiences that I had being a part of the football program and experiencing that.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And you do know that if you talk to anybody from Auburn, they swear that they were still number one that year?

Andre' George:

Yes, ma'am.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I had a minor in physics as an undergrad, I can't do the math around that at all. So I try not to talk to too many of those folks from Auburn about that year because their math doesn't work with my math.

Andre' George:

Right.

Ademi Smith:

Right.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Ademi, talk to me about a memorable experience that you had as a student.

Ademi Smith:

Andre stole mine, but it's all good. I guess another memory from the actual that same season, two games before that Peach Bowl game, we were having our rivalry game, the War on I-4 versus South Florida.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

South Florida.

Ademi Smith:

So I guess my memory I would highlight is it was a really good game back and forth, and there was a key play where Mike Hughes, he returned a kick return for a touchdown. And for me, during that specific game, I was working on the field in the end zone that he was running towards. So I remember, he catches the ball and I was like, "All right. It might be a pretty decent return." And I'm like, "Wait a second. He might score." And he's literally running towards me, and you hear the crowd just getting louder and louder and louder. So that was definitely like all time favorite moment at UCF.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So how did it feel being a native of Tampa when that game happened, right? How long did it take you to go back home after that, right?

Ademi Smith:

I get asked about this all the time. So for me personally, I'm very biased. I love Tampa, that's my hometown. But at the same time, when I went to UCF, I understood that's the rival school. So I'm always thumbs down to USF. I say the only time it gets a little bit complicated as I remember before that game, people had shirts saying like, "Tampa sucks." And I was like, "I don't know if I could get all the way down by that." I'm like, "Let's just keep it on USF, let's just keep it within the rivalry." But for me, it is all funny game.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Right. Excellent. So talk to me about extracurricular activities you participated in while you were a student. How about if you start?

Ademi Smith:

I guess one I would definitely highlight would be the UCF Sports Business Club. So we had the minor, but then there's also a club element to it that I was a part of, and we had such amazing opportunities and experiences to volunteer at different sporting events around really the whole state of Florida. So we did everything from volunteer to a golf tournament. Tim Tebow has a foundation where he hosts a prom night for special education students.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Great.

Ademi Smith:

And I found that to be extremely fulfilling. That was a lot of fun. So being part of that club, for sure, just getting to do all the different experience through that.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:  
Extracurriculars for you?

Andre' George:

For me, once again, like Ademi noted, that I was also part of the UCF Sports Management Minor, which is known as the minor that's major.

Ademi Smith:

Right.

Andre' George:

That was a great opportunity to being part of that club. Like Ademi said, they have extremely lot amount of volunteer opportunities and internship opportunities that the partners that they have within the sporting industry that they create those opportunities for us as students is amazing. They work year round, 365 days a year. I mean, they can [inaudible 00:14:26] summer right now, but they're thinking about their students.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Right.

Andre' George:

They're out building relationships with other sporting organizations to create opportunities for us. And I think one of the most memorable opportunities during the program for me was when I did a volunteer opportunity with the Olympic sports with the Special Olympics. So that was really eye-opening experience for me, seeing those Olympic Games with the Special Olympics. So that was great. And then also I was participating in MASS, the Multicultural Academic Support Services.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And Mr. Jackson's still there.

Andre' George:

Yes, ma'am. So I was a part of that. What drew me to them was one of the programs that they have is for first generational students, and I was a first generation. Even though I'm older, I'm still a first generational student in my family. So that drew me to participate in that. And then they also have some other different programs within that segment. So that I also went and took part in as well.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. So now let's talk about what you currently do in your current role. So talk to me about a day in the life of Andre George. What is involved with your current position?

Andre' George:

A day in the life for me, I mean, it changes from day to day, but typically what we do is we come in, we set up our equipment for practice, which is the video, film, and trailers that we use to film practices. We'll set those up, we'll film practice. After practice, we'll come inside, we'll import the video from

practice and get it uploaded to our system, and get it edited for the coaches to review it with the players. Then also, I'm responsible for creating cutups, a video for our coaches that they'll use to create game plans for our opponents. After that, is doing some other odds and end jobs that are around the office with supporting our coaches. I'm also supporting the personnel staff where Ademi works, and being a support service for them in case any video elements of the system may go down or they need some help with their computers.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. So, Ademi, you're a scout. What is a day of scouting look like for you?

Ademi Smith:

Right. So it's a tricky question because it changes so much throughout the year.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So this time of the year-

Ademi Smith:

Right.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

... colleges are getting ready to get started.

Ademi Smith:

Exactly.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Somebody's making decisions about who to look at, right?

Ademi Smith:

Exactly.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So talk to me about that.

Ademi Smith:

So like you said, we're in this kind of gearing up for the season right now, the fall. So throughout the fall, I'll travel to my assigned schools. Let's say like I'm at UCF, for example, right? I'll get up in the morning, go over to the school, I'll meet with various staff members, then we'll go into practice where I'll observe the players I'm assigned to watch during practice. After practice, there might be some additional time to speak with more staff members or start to watch some film. And it sounds quick, but you can be at a school for all day.

So once you're done at that particular school, then you can either go back to your hotel and start to type your notes there, or you can transit into the next city, drive to the next hotel, start typing there. Then you kind of prepare for the next day of school. So if I'm going to Florida, it is not uncommon for me to do

FIU, FAU, UCF, USF, all in one week. So a lot of driving around, a lot of watching different players throughout the fall. In the winter time when you're off the road, you focus more on cleaning up your reports. So you go back home wherever home may be for you, and you're reviewing all the tape with these same players that you watched throughout the year, just making sure your evaluations are where you want them to be.

Once the calendar flips January, you start to go toward all-star games such as the Senior Bowl, the East-West Shrine game where you have all some of the top prospects, senior prospects from all across the country competing in these events. That's another opportunity to watch good on good as we call it, good competition to get a clearer evaluation. So you'll see every team is there. And then obviously April is the draft.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Right.

Ademi Smith:

So let me not forget about pro days though in March. So March, you have your pro days that you're going to, and then obviously the draft is in April. So no two days are the same ever because every school has the different rules and obviously every season throughout the year is a little bit different as well.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

So what is the thing about your job that you enjoy the most?

Ademi Smith:

That's tough. Honestly, it wouldn't even just be football. Honestly, it's the people. So in my job, I was in the building for my first two years here, and our culture is top-notch. We have excellent group of individuals here. They've been a catalyst to my development in football as a person in so many different ways. Working with those people every day has been awesome. But even as a scout on the road, you have opportunities to meet new people every single day. And I love talking to people and meeting new people. So that's been extremely rewarding for me.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Mr. George.

Ademi Smith:

Yes, ma'am.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

What is the most exciting part of your job?

Andre' George:

The most exciting part of my job, mine is a little bit, I would say, more interesting than Ademi because I'm on the team side of it, so being part of a team, working with my colleagues in my department. On my arrival here at Detroit, they were very supportive to me, helping me adapt to the new area where I was coming to. And like Ademi said, the culture here was mind-blowing. It was extremely amazing when I got here. I tell Ademi the story all the time, I say, "I couldn't believe the welcoming that I got. I was just



shocked." I was at my desk, and the other employees from other department was coming in, and introducing themselves to me, and welcoming me to the team, and I'm like, "My goodness." I was like, "This is amazing." And I was just blown away with that.

And then I guess to sum everything all up, at the end of the day, once we prepare all week for our opponent, just game day, going to either our stadium and playing our opponent to seeing all the work that we put in throughout the week, see the results of it on the field. And then the fun part about it is going out of town when we play away games, traveling on the road, and going to different cities and states.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. So this is where you get to share your wisdom with our students. What advice do you have for our current students? I'm going to start with Andre.

Andre' George:

What I would definitely highly recommend for current students is to be able to be open, have open mind, be willing to learn, take advantage of every opportunity that's at your disposal, whether it is a volunteer opportunity or internship opportunity, not just per se in the sporting industry, but any industry that you want to pursue a career in.

And then one of the most important thing is a lot of people say networking, but when I took a couple courses in our sport business management minor, they took it a step farther about networking because a lot of people, they network, but they only network when they need something. And they took it a step farther and say, "Building relationships." You want to cultivate those relationships that you build where you stand out to them and stand out in the back of their mind. So when opportunities do come available, or you may need some assistance with something, they'll be more than forthcoming and be willing to help you and assist you to help you get where you're trying to go instead of just meeting somebody and then not talking to them for a couple months or a year and then say, "Hey, this job became available, could you help me out?" So my biggest thing is building relationships.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. Ademi, what advice would you give to our current students in the College of Undergraduate Studies?

Ademi Smith:

Never stop learning. That would be mine for sure. I mean, there's always something that you can continue to learn within your specific field. There's always a skillset that you can sharpen. Mastery really is like a myth in a way. You're never truly completely perfect at something. So if you can stay motivated to continue to learn and just sharpen your skills, I think it'll take you a long way across any industry, honestly.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. So in thinking back now based on the advice that you've given to our students, is there something that you wished you had done or done differently while you were at UCF?

Andre' George:

That's interesting question as I see here pondering that question as you asked it. But honestly, I guess one thing for me, I was coming in as older student and I already had associate's degree. So I only had really two years remaining technically-

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Right.

Andre' George:

... to get my bachelor's degree. But I was in taking advantage of every opportunity. So I kind of took the path that my mentors was providing to me, and just following it, and just, like I say, taking advantage of any and every opportunity that became available, I was willing to learn, and I just did everything the right way that was given to me. I followed that pathway that was given to me.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Anything that you might have done that you wish you had done or maybe had done slightly differently?

Ademi Smith:

So our video coordinator in college, Brad Helton, he always had this [inaudible 00:25:44] like, "Hey, when you're a senior, make sure you take advantage of go and tailgate. I'll give you a game off to go tailgate, be in the stands as a fan for a game." I never took advantage. I don't know why I didn't. I think I kept telling myself, "I'll do next home game."

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

The next thing you knew you were graduating.

Ademi Smith:

It was over. Next thing I know, it was like, "Wait, there is no next home game." So I look back now, I'm like, "Man, it would've been really cool to just be in the student section for one game and really feel like-"

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

And catch the vibe.

Ademi Smith:

Yeah, I get all the vibe because we're working during the games, typically. So I never got to do that. And it's not the end of the world, but I would tell people, definitely, I guess on the micro level, live in the moment while you're in college, even if you're focused and have a specific goal, you're also a college student. Take full advantage of that. There's no four years like that.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Well, you are always welcome back to attend home game-

Ademi Smith:

Thank you.

Andre' George:

Thank you.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

... and be in the stands, and sit in the student section and catch the vibe.

Ademi Smith:

For sure. I'm going to have to do that.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Absolutely. So if you've ever heard my podcast before, you know that we end our podcast with what I like to call the lightning round. The lightning round is one where I just give our audience an opportunity to get to know you as people, asking some very basic questions, but giving me responses just very quickly off the top of your head. So who would like to start?

Ademi Smith:

I'll go.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. So Ademi is going to start on the lightning round. Favorite color?

Ademi Smith:

Purple.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Favorite song?

Ademi Smith:

That's hard. One that never gets old is International Players Anthem.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. Favorite movie?

Ademi Smith:

Friday. I know every word.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. Your go-to outfit?

Ademi Smith:

Go-to just for something quick?

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Yes.

Ademi Smith:

Hoodie and joggers.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

All right. Your favorite book?

Ademi Smith:

Atomic Habits.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. Favorite author?

Ademi Smith:

Malcolm Gladwell.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. Thing to do when you have free time?

Ademi Smith:

Listen to music.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

All right. And one last question. What do you tell your family when you haven't called in a week?

Ademi Smith:

See what had happened was...

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

That's a feeling thing.

Ademi Smith:

I'd probably say something like, "I was traveling for work," or something. I, at least typically, will send a text though. So I don't let it get too far apart.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

You don't let it get too far.

Ademi Smith:

Yeah.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

All right. Good job. Thank you. Ready, Andre?

Andre' George:

Yes, ma'am.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Favorite color?

Ademi Smith:

Blue.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Favorite song?

Andre' George:

The Best In Me by Marvin Sapp.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

I love that song.

Andre' George:

Yes, ma'am.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Favorite movie?

Andre' George:

Fast & Furious franchise. All of them.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

All of them. And they're up to 10 now, right? Yes

Andre' George:

Yes, ma'am. I'm action junkie.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. Go-to outfit?

Andre' George:

Shorts and T-shirt.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Favorite book?

Andre' George:  
Relentless by Tim Grover.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:  
Favorite author?

Andre' George:  
Tim Grover.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:  
And the thing you tell your friends when you haven't seen them in a year?

Andre' George:  
That's a good question because typically out of my friends, I'm the one that they call-

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:  
You're the one that's reaching back.

Andre' George:  
They call me the nucleus of our friends because they say-

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:  
So if you disappear, something's wrong.

Andre' George:  
Yeah. So everybody contact me to find out how everybody doing. So they're like, "Man, hey, call Andre. If he don't know then nobody know." So typically, if not see them personally, I reach out by phone and call or send a text message. Ademi, he's well aware of my text message. He say, "Man, I got that book you sent me this morning." He said, "Man, how about trimming some of that down?"

Ademi Smith:  
It's all love.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:  
That's wonderful. So you are the glue?

Andre' George:  
Yes, ma'am.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:  
That's a beautiful thing. All righty. Well, gentlemen, I can't tell you how much fun I have had being engaged in this wonderful conversation with the two of you, and to be able to call you alums of the College of Undergraduate Studies.

Ademi Smith:

Thank you, ma'am.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

It has been a joy-

Andre' George:

Thank you.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

... and a pleasure to be engaged in conversation with each and every one of you. I wish you all the success in the world. I can't wait to see you one day on TV running things, being in charge. I'll probably be retired by then. But if you send me tickets, I will show up.

Ademi Smith:

All right. There you go.

Andre' George:

All right.

Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry:

Excellent. And to our audience, thank you for listening. This is Dr. Theodorea Regina Berry for Academically Speaking, and you have a great day.