INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

CASSIE WILLIAMSON-REISDORPH: So, when I first met him, he shared stories with me about Missoula and showed me pictures of the snow and cross-country skiing.

KATIE CHRISTISON: Last Thanksgiving, I was unable to go home for Thanksgiving break and I went over to his house and had Thanksgiving dinner there and it was, it was great. So, it's re—they really enveloped me into the family.

JOE SOL: My first time meeting him was we went and had a formal meeting on a project, but then he suggested that we all go for a “jogaboot” afterwards. And that's where, that's where you really kind of get to know JQ, going and running and talking. If you can keep up and if you're not out of breath.

ASHBY KINCH: This is “Confluence: where great ideas flow together,” a podcast of the Graduate School of the University of Montana. On “Confluence,” we explore the scenic rivers of knowledge that flow through our beautiful mountain campus.

You just heard the voices of Cassie Williamson-Reisdorph, Joe Sol, and Katie Christison, graduate students in the Doctoral Interdisciplinary Studies program, talking about our featured guest for this episode, Dr. John Quindry. He’s a Professor in the Integrative Physiology program who has a great reputation as a mentor.

I’m your host, Ashby Kinch—Associate Dean of the Graduate School—and I’m delighted to be guiding your sonic float today. Each episode, we pick a poem or short passage from literature about rivers for our guest to read. Here’s John Quindry reading “What the Water Knows,” by Sam Hamill.

JOHN QUINDRY:

What the mouth sings, the soul must learn to forgive.

A rat’s as moral as a monk in the eyes of the real world.

Still, the heart is a river

pouring from itself, a river cannot be crossed.

It opens on a bay

and turns back upon itself as the tide comes in,

it carries the cry of the loon and the salts

of the unutterable human.

A distant eagle enters the mouth of a river,

salmon no longer run and his wide wings glide

upstream until he disappears

into nothing from which he came. Only the thought remains.

KINCH: That image of the eagle, which is a common but always inspiring sight when floating the rivers of Western Montana, provides a great frame for our discussion, which includes John’s Montana story. He came to UM from Auburn, where he was a well-established research professor before heading West to combine his love for the great outdoors with his research interests and collaborations with other Montana professors in Integrative Physiology. In the episode, we discuss his research on the role of exercise in the prevention of cardiovascular disease, as well as his labs work on the way our body processes oxygen in conditions of high-intensity exercise or stress. Along the way, we discuss the practical value for research scientists of courses in English, which helped him hone and refine his thinking and communication. And as always, we discuss his ideas about the skills that students need to succeed in graduate school on the long haul to a Ph.D. You’ll hear the voices of his graduate students interspersed throughout the episode, reflecting on their own research and their relationship with JQ, as his students call him.

But we’ll start the episode with John reading lyrics from a song he hand-picked for our river theme, “Blue Raft,” by Common Children.

Welcome to Confluence! We hope you enjoy the float!

QUINDRY:

Floating you and me

Careening to the sea

The water is deep

Yeah, the river is wide

In my room

On my raft

Where I ride...

KINCH: It's just great that you chose that it's a perfect mesh with our program, but why did it spring to your mind?

QUINDRY: Well, given the task of finding something that was river related, this river that runs through it—this is a song by a lesser-known group who I thought put out some good grungy music back in the early nineties.

KINCH: Yeah.

QUINDRY: And I liked that this was really a, essentially a call to faith by the faithless, but it was, it's framed in a sort of an existentialistic world, which is definitely where I was at that time. So that's...

KINCH: At the time it came out? Back in the —

QUINDRY: And prior, yeah, that late teens, early twenties phase of life. I was definitely a little bit fatalistic and the, you know, these words resonated with me.

KINCH: Fantastic. So, on Confluence, we like to engage with our colleagues interests that are beyond the field and, and as an English professor, I just, it caught my eye—as you can imagine that you said one of the more influential courses you took in college was an English class or English classes and it kind of stimulated you to kind of get into writing. So, I’d like you to talk a little bit more about that. Tell me about those classes. Were you an eager enrollee or was one these courses that someone said you had to take it, but then something happened once you took it?

QUINDRY: I was eager. I became an honors student and I had decided I was going to take all my honors course work, where possible, in humanities. And I'd set an early goal and I, for the life of me, I can't figure out where I got this idea. Somebody gave it to me, no doubt. But, I decided I wanted to be a brilliant or great communicator. And I'm not, I haven't achieved that yet.

KINCH: I don't know. Don't sell yourself short.

QUINDRY: But I'm moving in the right direction. And I realized that I needed, what I needed was to understand literature. I needed to understand how to write because I didn't put any effort into high school or any education prior. And, I always knew it was important, but I just, I don’t know. I was just in a different place. But I realized that the humanities — history and English and—those were going to be my secret to success. And I found to this day I'm more well-read than most of my science colleagues—not that they aren't well read in some other ways. But, my interest in literature or to poetry or the arts and art history have benefited my ability to write a grant or they, they've given me different perspectives.

KINCH: That's what I like about your, that story that you're telling is that it, it's not that it's a decoration. It actually is practical. You know, that it's had a practical impact.

QUINDRY: Oh, it's completely practical.

KINCH: Yeah, too often I hear people sort of give a version of a sort of breadth and it’s like a fluff thing they do around the edges. Or it's fun or it's entertaining. But, I love this version of it because that's the version we'd want to hear most, I think, out in the broader community. To recognize there are kind of some forms of thinking that are unique to the humanities that will actually help you in these other areas if you can figure out that way to bring them together.

QUINDRY: Yeah, I believe it.

KINCH: Yeah.

QUINDRY: And I always have. I would latch onto an author I'd latch onto Hemingway, or, and then I got latched onto C.S. Lewis among others or Kurt Vonnegut. I read everything he wrote.

KINCH: Oh, is that right?

QUINDRY: Yeah, in high school. And, in fact, interesting note: Slaughterhouse Five was the first thing I read by him as, you know, every high schooler probably in the country, or at least back in the day —

KINCH: I was going to say back then, not anymore.

QUINDRY: When they talk about this person, you know, essentially having their neck broken by somebody's boot and it was just, it describes the, the physiology of someone's neck being broken up, you know, when I think back to that, I am reminded I was always a physiologist I just had to discover it.

KINCH: That’s so interesting, yeah.

QUINDRY: But that sort of existentialistic way of the way Kurt Vonnegut would describe that was interesting to me. And so —

KINCH: So that image really caught your attention in, in that particular novel, I mean, whereas other people might've drawn other things from it, right?

QUINDRY: It was so sterile.

KINCH: The time the, you know, the time dislocation is something people are attracted to in that novel.

QUINDRY: Right.

KINCH: The way, you know. So, but, but that one, what jumped out at you was the sort of vivid, the—the neutral, detached voice describing this vivid act of violence.

QUINDRY: It was stunning to me. Well, and he wrote a book called Galapagos, which is, in my mind, is the gem of, you know, a bunch of gems and the social commentary where society devolves because we're so self-destructive, and one of the vestiges of human—modern human social culture is, these humans devolve and they're on this, you know, they're out in the Galapagos. And so, you know, it's kind of come full circle in terms of evolutionary theory. So, these seal-like post-humans are all sitting around and the one thing that still remains is if one of them farts in public, they all just laughed their heads off. And that sort of social commentary is just hysterical. It reminds us we're all the same.

KINCH: John's got a great sense of humor, and his playful use of language is something his students love about life in his lab. Here's Cassie, Joe, and Katie talking about the quirky "Quindry-isms" he uses, like their lab motto: “calm blue ocean.”

￼CHRISTISON: We took a graduate level like second semester of Exercise Physiology from JQ. And he wasn't able to proctor our first exam, but oh boy, it was a doozy. And, all of us with 10 minutes left, we're like, like writing things down and trying to finish—

WILLIAMSON-REISDROPH: Drawing random lines on graphs.

CHRISTISON: It was, it was a challenge. And it was really funny because afterwards we all were in our office and defeated. Like completely defeated. And so all of a sudden, we get this email from JQ that was just like “calm blue ocean.” It's okay. Everything's fine. And so “calm blue ocean” has kind of become our lab's saying since then.

SOL: He’s got some JQ-isms I'd say just kind of, there's a working vocabulary that makes you crack up a little bit when you're talking to him.

CHRISTISON**:** “Drinkess.”

SOL: “Drinkess.”

CHRISTISON: Never drink. “Drinkess.”

WILLIAMSON-REISDORPH: Yep. Always “drinkess.”

SOL: “The boy, the girl” he's talking about his son and his daughter. The “wifeness,” “joggaboot.” He’s —

CHRISTISON: It's all the small things he does. It's the “drinkess” and the “wifeness” and the “jogaboot” It's his funny way of saying things.

SOL: He’s got his own terms for everything.

CHRISTISON: Yep.

WILLIAMSON REISDORPH: “Cheeps.”

CHRISTISON: It's, it's “cheeps.” He always likes to try to make people say “chips” like “cheeps.” And so, he'll keep saying it until they say it back.

KINCH: So, tell us your Montana story. How'd you end up at the University of Montana?

QUINDRY: My Montana story is pretty much garden variety from the beginning, which is to say I was really born an academic—a physiologist that happened to be interested in exercise and had, was living sort of the typical vanilla life of a professor. I was at Auburn University. Had a great family. Great lab. Everything's fine.

KINCH: You're not throwing Auburn under the bus here.

QUINDRY: I am not. No, no, no. Auburn was wonderful to me. I wasn't particularly happy in that climate, in that environment. It was cultural, it was the region. I've liked the mountains and the Rocky Mountains since I was 10. And I was kind of on a trajectory where my wife and I had kind of vowed to move to the Rocky Mountains once we were retired, but we realized we'd be moving away from our grandkids—future grandkids. Our children were in high school and junior high at the time that we moved here. Anyway, point is—I had a midlife health crisis that I survived. Perfectly fine. And went ahead and we just went and took a big plunge. I gave up tenure, full professor, whole bunch of other financial benefits of being at a, you know, a top public and threw caution to the wind and moved our—what we'd like to say is our future grandkids out West.

KINCH: Yeah. I love that. The mountain discount, right? We all, a lot of us have that story about what we gave up to come here and then what we got, you know. So that's, I mean, part

of what I kind of want to talk about is what have you liked best since being here? What is it, what is the move done for you personally? Professionally?

QUINDRY: It's allowed me to live in ways that I really enjoy. I have never driven to work since I've lived in Missoula. I walk or bike occasionally run, but I usually bike and then walk sometimes. That provides a quality of life that most people probably can't understand, but just to think, to listen to NPR, to work on experiments, work on something that I'm writing. I can walk, ski, mountain bike, run from the house and see wildlife. I see eagles all the time.

KINCH: Yeah, yeah.

QUINDRY: So, I'm reading the poem—I'm thinking of all the eagles I see in Hellgate Canyon. It—those sorts of experiences on a daily basis are what energize me and make me ready to work hard.

KINCH: While John definitely cashes in on his mountain discount, he also has a reputation as a hard worker, striving for a work-life balance that Joe, Cassie and Katie admire.

SOL: Every time you walk by his office, it's just like there's an engine running in there. He's just always in on his laptop. It's either a meeting where he's acting as an advisor and an invite speaker on some lecture or he's reading a journal.

WILLIAMSON-REISDORPH: He just doesn't stop working.

CHRISTISON: I was going to say. His work ethic is unlike anyone else I've ever seen. He —

WILLIAMSON-REISDORPH: Agreed.

CHRISTISON: He has the ability to just keep working.

WILLIAMSON-REISDORPH: He makes a habit of getting up before his family to get his work done so that he has the freedom to go enjoy family time when they're awake on the weekends. So, he definitely has a strong work ethic that I admire.

CHRISTISON: Yeah.

SOL: The thing that stands out to me is the amount of work he's willing to put in for us. He's obviously got a lot on his plate. Always. He never really says no to much. He's always going to be a part going to go be an editor for this journal or that, be a part of this council or that. But he always makes time for us.

KINCH: Tell us a little bit about how you first got into research, not just your specific research, but research in general. When did, when did you kind of catch the bug and think of yourself as being a researcher?

QUINDRY: It was a weird thing that I was a very underperforming high school student and I got to the university and decided, well, I've always been told I had some potential. I'm going to, I'm just going to flip that switch. And it took me a couple semesters of C’s and maybe a B or two and I woke up one day and I couldn't get a B after that essentially. And, the point is, I'd found something I loved and I put all sorts of interest into it. But not having a support network toward academia, I had to sort of grow into it. And the way I grew into it was from a lab. Just putting time into the lab because learning in and of itself was a pure pleasure and, you know, losing track of hours working all night, just because it was something I wanted to do. It was beyond what I needed to tick the boxes for matriculation.

KINCH: Right. So, you just kind of discovered the pleasure of the grind.

QUINDRY: Yeah. Well, and it wasn't a grind. It was—

KINCH: It didn't feel like a grind.

QUINDRY: No.

KINCH: Yeah. And that's, that's when you know, you've found the right topic, right?

QUINDRY: Right.

KINCH: Yeah. You can, you can do that extra work and it doesn't feel, yeah, like labor.

QUINDRY: Right.

KINCH: Well, and so, you know, you referred, you know, when we were talking earlier in previous exchanges to kind of semi-narcissistic interest in exercise science in particular as being part of your drive. But I'm guessing that's pretty common in your field. Like, I'm guessing research profs in your field — do you guys have little competitions trying to outdo each other? Pushups in the copy room or during department meetings?

QUINDRY: It's, it's definitely a brand of narcissism that lives in the world of Exercise Physiology, which is to say most of us want to know why we aren't better at our given, you know, chosen sport or whatever endeavor. But, I think it's also something that's true of any sub sector of society. It doesn't matter what it is. People size each other up from the first moment they're figuring out in sort of creating an unwritten, sometimes written, but often unwritten, hierarchy. People, it turns out, a lot of times don't like the challenge. So, you could figure out who is the best at whatever. So, it's actually, there's not as much one-to-one posturing as you might expect.

KINCH: People find their lane, like, this is my thing—

QUINDRY: Yeah, this is my thing. Or, they're so comfortable with their success in some other realm, they don't need to be the best in all things.

KINCH: Fantastic, yeah, I get that. Well, so as I understand it, your research, you know, pardon me, of course, English professor, right? But I mean, part of the show is about me trying to kind of grapple with other people's research. So, as I understand it, your research focuses on the impact of stressors on the human body during high intensity exercise. So, exercise in difficult conditions, sometimes high altitude. Tell us a story about the evolution of the research questions that are driving your work and what you're doing now here in Montana, especially with smoke inhalation. That kind of caught my attention. I'm really interested in—there's a lot of places on campus that are doing interesting fire-related research, but this is coming at it from the human body side of it.

QUINDRY: So, there's three things that I've done since the mid-1990s. And the first one is exercise. That was the narcissistic part. I always like to exercise, but I very quickly gave up my interest in sport performance because the second of my sort of research triad is free radical biology. And then the third is cardiovascular disease. And when I discovered exercise as a treatment and prevention of cardiovascular disease, that pathology captivated me very quickly and that's really been my driving force. So, it's those three things: exercise, cardiovascular disease and free radical biology. And it turns out that exercise causes an acute dose of free radicals. And it's sort of the, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. You can't exercise for the most part all day. So, you get a small dose of free radicals. And then that sends a biochemical signal, actually a host of biochemical signals, to cells throughout the body. And then collectively the tissues adapt in ways that make it resilient. Should there be some sort of stress, some sort of pathology, which in my interest is cardiovascular disease. So that, those three things, that foundation that I picked up as an early graduate student has served me well whether it's an animal model, a human model, whether we're talking high altitude, smoke inhalation or just cardiac rehabilitation.

KINCH: Gotcha. So, and so that free radical idea is that the body is now resetting its ability to deal with stress at a higher level. It's able to, to re—you use the term resilience, right? It's able to raise its resilience to the stress condition.

QUINDRY: It is raising the resilience and the point that I didn't actually add yet to this narrative is that most diseases, or dare I say virtually all diseases, are caused by chronic free radical stress. And so, the idea would be exercise induces all these endogenous—these natural defenses get turned on almost in a switch like fashion. And that means when faced with the chronic stressor — smoke inhalation, whatever factor of cardiovascular disease acquisition. All of those involve free radical stress and in the exercised individual, it's that small sub-lethal beneficial dose of free radicals that turns on the biochemical protection.

KINCH: JQ has an impressive body of research that’s drawn students to study with him. Cassie and Joe recount hearing about John’s research which led them to pursue their Ph.D.’s at UM.

WILLIAMSON-REISDORPH: When I first got involved in research as an undergraduate student on my first day, my master's advisor printed off a 20-something-page paper of Dr. Quindry’s and handed it to me. I actually still have it and I've used it and referred to it throughout my doctorate. And a year or so later, I met Dr. Quindry in a meeting at the Southeast American College of Sports Medicine Conference. Ultimately, when I decided to continue on to a Ph.D. program, I ended up choosing the University of Montana because I wanted to work in Dr. Quindry’s lab to learn more about oxidative stress, environmental physiology and cardiovascular physiology, which are all topics that JQ explores within his research.

So, we've done a variety of work. We've done some work in a cardiac rehabilitation center. Looking at interventions to try to encourage people to be more physically active on their own outside of their rehab experience. We've also focused a lot on wildland firefighters and wood smoke exposure. So, that's probably where I've spent the majority of my time during my doctoral work is examining the effects of woodsmoke on cardiovascular variables.

SOL: ￼So when I first met John Quindry I'd actually been out of school for a couple of years and I'd gone through and got my bachelor's and my master's at the University of Montana and actually gotten a job with the forest service based off of what really the department had to offer. And then going through and doing project work there with the forest service was when I first met JQ after he’d come to the University of Montana and he’d been there for a year or two. And really what we were seeing with a lot of our project work is really what John Quindry brought to the table. A lot of his work with oxidative stress and really with the focus of the forest service, which is looking at long-term health of firefighters. So, he brought a whole new venue of research that was really pretty fascinating for us. And it was something that I didn't have a background in and quickly saw a need that hey, I need to get in there and work with this guy. And since then, it's just been amazing.

So, the specific research that I’m doing with Quindry is we're looking at cardiovascular health of firefighters. So, looking at both a short-term and a long-term fashion. So, looking at if we can examine how, what the effect of one shift of smoke does to the body compared to how does that accumulate over a career or a season of firefighting. ￼

KINCH: So, I'm going to drop some hot track titles from your CV here. *Environmental Temperature and Exercise Induced Blood Oxidative Stress*. That was a big hit. All the kids were dancing to it.

QUINDRY: Right, right.

KINCH: And then *Impact of Extreme Exercise at High Altitude on Oxidative Stress in Humans.* And some of your coauthors there, and this predates your time here, but are familiar to people here at University of Montana. Chuck Dumke was on there. Brent Ruby was on there. Anyone else I'm missing? I think that's, you'd already collaborated with them —

QUINDRY: Those are the key players that are still at the university. Yes.

KINCH: Prior to coming here.

QUINDRY: Right.

KINCH: So how did you cross their paths before?

QUINDRY: Chuck and I actually were assistant professors at Appalachian State University. So, 15 years ago.

KINCH: Yeah.

QUINDRY: And, we would go out at noon and have these philosophical and science and life discussions, you know, for an hour at a time. And as we moved forward and he then came here, 10 or 12 years ago, he would interact with Brent Ruby and they would say, “Oh, we've got this whole new, exciting, funded topic.” And they would just, you know, wax eloquently and figure out like, what could we add that has never been done? And that's where I came in.

KINCH: Cool. Yeah. So, it's a great collaboration and a great story about the kind of movement of faculty around the campus. I mean, around the country, and how that kind of ends up having these results down the line, you know, in terms of collaboration.

QUINDRY: And, you know, after the, after the recession—2010 time frame. There—the grant funding world changed. So, I used to get most of my grants pretty much just me. I would

write them and I pay a student or a tech. But it was, it was really just me. And after we came out of the recession, I found my ability to get a grant by myself almost non-existent. I've gotten a few, but they've been smaller dollar. The only way I can get funded—and it really in any significant way now, to this day, is as a research team. And what it means is we share a pot of money and we produce at least as much per person as we would have back in the day. So from, I think, from the federal funding perspective it's an exceedingly good value. But we have been forced to get along and to share and to bring our best ideas together.

KINCH: Yeah.

QUINDRY: For a common good and it seems obvious to me that that is the way research should work.

KINCH: It’s a better model. In other words, it's not just the efficiency of the research dollars—It's also the collaboration and the intellectual exchange that you're forced to do when you have those kinds of—

JOHN: We're definitely, yeah, we're cross-pollinating and, and it's, there's a research synergy to say the least.

KINCH: You're currently advising three Ph.D. students. All of whom are in the Doctoral Interdisciplinary Studies program. And that's how you and I first met, when Cassie applied. So, I want to, you know, just hear a little bit more from you about your field as an interdisciplinary field. What are the kinds of ideas and techniques and methods that it draws on from different fields?

QUINDRY: It actually goes in a number of different directions and I've found that each student that you really mentor at the master’s or doctoral level, it's almost like they're your academic children. And it's important to remember that each one of these protege are their own person. Even if they have the same interests, seemingly, as somebody before them. They're just not the same person. Their strengths and weaknesses, their individual personality profiles. So, the point is: where might they go with their career? I've trained a lot of future physicians. Physical therapist. Health and allied health professionals. But, I've trained a lot of people who want to go to the university primarily to instruct. Others who want to be in a medical school environment as a researcher, as a, you know, a biomedical scientist.

KINCH: Yeah. And so, in all of those fields you just mentioned kind of have like they'll bend in a certain direction, but they have kind of an interdisciplinary overlap, right? A human body but it can be studied in these number of different ways. And so, the direction that that student took, would they be pushed into different kinds of coursework and different kinds of methodologies on that basis?

QUINDRY: And a lot of the coursework and methodology is similar. And then the question is what, how are they going to, and then enact common principles of lifestyle medicine as a physician or as a healthcare professional or as an instructor or as a researcher.

KINCH: Yeah. Well, and two of your current students are women who are interested in gender. They're interested in specific effects on female body. What have you learned? Have you learned some things through their interest in that question or is that kind of unfolding now?

QUINDRY: It -- with those particular projects it continues to unfold, but invariably I learn new things. And so, the model that's been held in my lab is I write a grant, I get funded and all of these things are sort of projected years down the road. So, I'm planting seeds now for students that have yet to come. So, they come in and they sort of inherit the next generation of ideas, you know, it all kind of works two or three years ahead. But once they come in, each student brings in their own perspective and their own interest that then molds this planted idea into something sometimes completely different.

KINCH: Let’s hear from Katie Christison about how JQ influenced her to stay at UM for her Ph.D. and how her research continues to evolve in the Interdisciplinary Studies program.

CHRISTISON: I'm actually starting to look at kind of insulin resistance and insulin responses to pharmacological components of breast cancer patients and how exercise can maybe ameliorate those responses and that resistance. I will continue to also help with wildland firefighters and kind of continue on this critical training study. The first reenactment was actually part of my thesis data, and I'm excited to kind of continue on and expand that. So, I'll continue to work with him on woodsmoke and critical training and kind of help Cassie and Joe to make their dissertation possible. It was actually Dr. Quindry who first encouraged me to stay here at the University of Montana to get my Ph.D. in the DIS program because he knew how much I loved Missoula and how much I didn't want to leave and how I loved the University of Montana. So, he actually was the first one to make staying a possibility. Through my time here, that's really given me a chance to continue a high-level engagement within the department that I got my master's in while expanding beyond this department to opportunities across campus.

KINCH: When you are looking for graduate students to mentor, what are the features you're looking for? What do you, what do you like to see in a graduate student?

QUINDRY: I am not particularly interested in GRE scores or GPA. I want those to be there. I mean, somebody has to have some aptitude and they need, so they typically will have a good GPA. Many of them will have very good GRE scores, for example. But they need to have this natural inquisitive nature and they need to have some internal drive. I'm less interested in raw talent than I am in work ethic. And what I found is, and having been born from some highly talented individuals and some lesser talented people with work ethic, a work ethic wins over aptitude every time. So, it's kind of like the criteria and fitness levels. There needs to be a minimum threshold for ability and aptitude, but work ethic and an interest in, a driving interest in science for the sake of science, knowledge for the sake of knowledge. And then it's also helpful in our world, or in my world, to want to be a little bit altruistic about this. That we don't—

KINCH: Some ideals?

QUINDRY: Yeah. We want to have some ideals and we want to make the, we want to leave the world in a better place because we are an applied science.

KINCH: Yeah. And, and I think, I mean, I'm thinking too about, you know, what gets us through the difficulties of graduate school, right. And you, you've spoken about this. And so, having those ideals and having that work ethic gets us through the choke points, right? And we know how hard a dissertation is to write, right? We know what you and you, you've spoken to this, this -- that your dissertation experience was particularly difficult, but then in the long run, highly generative of a whole career worth of effort. And that's kind of part of what we're doing on the podcast too, is demystifying graduate school a little bit for people, you know, that they can hear our research faculty talk about their own struggles. And so, I've referred to this as the CV of failures. We're trying to get people to kind of say something about their highest profile failure. So, what would that be for you? The thing that you, you know, that you failed to accomplish, that you, that really, you know, in some ways impacted you and made you think about things differently?

QUINDRY: I think some of the things that I failed to accomplish—I at one point had decided I was going to go to medical school after the doctorate, which was in Biomedical Science. So, I got a medical school Ph.D. and was going to then just launch right into medical school. And, at the time it wasn't an issue of getting in. It wasn't an issue of getting through. What I didn't recognize at the time was that I didn't have the emotional makeup to be a physician. That any physician, the good ones, but any physician is going to make an—semi-informed decision, which at the time is the best decision that could have been made and it's going to result probably in hastening the death of a patient. And, and it turns out, I don't have the psychological makeup to weather that. That—it's a reality, I think, for any physician. And I had friends -- I've always kept a mentoring group and they would sit me down and tell me -- essentially, they would tell me, for some reason they sensed I shouldn't go to medical school. And they couldn't really articulate why, but they were onto something and it took me five or six years after I didn't go to medical school to kind of come to terms with that. But it felt like a failure for years.

KINCH: So that's an interesting sort of the overall psychology of how the work matches with the psychological strengths or, or habits or states of mind you need to do it.

QUINDRY: Well, it is. And I've watched a number of students who flourished after the stresses of taking exam after the stresses of the hot seat of defending their comprehensive exams or their dissertation. Students who weren’t very impressive in those scenarios. Once, once they have that sort of gun at their head, so to speak, pressure off of them, I've seen people mature in ways that you couldn't have predicted. And that's where other faculty would come back and ask me, how am I such a good talent scout? And sometimes — I've always tried to look at where's the sleeper talent. Where's the dark horse that people don't see coming? And I think it's because people are so driven by the GRE scores.

KINCH: Yeah.

QUINDRY: Or they want to know who is the early talent? Who got identified as gifted in first grade? And I'd rather find the people who failed to be identified through high school as gifted, but they are.

KINCH: John’s students praise his thoughtful and supportive engagement. Let’s listen in as Joe, Katie, and Cassie talk about their experiences with him, especially the “family atmosphere” he likes to cultivate.

SOL: If we send a paper in and we're looking for edits, even if he's just a coauthor on the paper, he'll put down what he has and put in a day or two of edits. And sometimes it's daunting. There might be a lot of red on that paper that you get back, but it's all good feedback. And it, it's going to make you a better writer. It's going to make you a better professional with the feedback that he does give you.

CHRISTISON: And I would also say that extends beyond us down to even the undergraduate level. I've noticed, you know, undergraduates that I've mentored that have used him for like or, you know, have asked him for help or, you know, a letter of recommendation or something. He is always willing to sit down with anyone and talk about their future and talk about how he can help them. Like he is constantly looking to help his students at all levels succeed in whatever they want to succeed in.

WILLIAMSON-REISDORPH: And I feel like it's not even just the people that ask him for help. He's constantly thinking about opportunities that he can offer to his students too. Sometimes I'll go into weekly meetings and he will have written things down throughout the week that he wants to talk to me about that are things that he just thought I might be interested in doing.

SOL: He just likes a lot of interaction. If you're not meeting with them about once a week, he's kind of wondering what's going on. He wants to know what's going on in your life. He wants to know what's going on with school projects. He wants to be there, be available. And so just with a lot of our weekly meetings, things like that, it's just, we've developed a rapport. Every meeting starts off with, “Hey, how's the family doing? How are you doing?” Things like that. And then we'll get down to the nuts and bolts after that.

WILLIAMSON-REISDORPH: I think one of the best things about having him as a mentor is that he really does consider you a member of his family. I mean, he has watched my dog when I've gone out of town. We've been over there on Halloween, on Thanksgiving. His wife feels like our family. We know his kids. It's just a really great environment to work in.

SOL: Always the end goal is he wants the people coming out of this department to be some of the most competent people in their fields. That's something he takes pride in. He wants to challenge you, but you're going to walk out of it in a better spot.

KINCH: Your program, Integrated Physiology and Athletic Training, recently moved from the School of Education into the renamed College of Health. And, I kind of find it interesting to think about Exercise Science, you've already touched on this, as a health field, you know -- that, but, and so, you know, it is a health field, right? But it -- the School of Education was also part of the sort of field of education. So, I'm kind of looking for you to sort of comment a little bit about what the shift into the College of Health has done in terms of the program thinking about itself and what new conversations are unfolding. And I'm thinking particularly about being around other health professions, community and public health, you know, what has shifted since that change?

QUINDRY: Yeah. There's a couple of different schools of thought in our world these days. One is we are born from physical education and coaching and dare I say, there's nothing a university can do that’s more important than to teach new teachers. And so, I think if we have

an existential discussion about what's most important at a university, I think it's College of Education, quite frankly. That does, not to say everything else isn’t important.

KINCH: But you’re seeding that next generation through that work.

QUINDRY: Right. Yes. Yeah. Normal—what would have, in the past, been called normal schools or normal universities. Teaching schools. Normal being a teacher.

KINCH: And, and I think you went to one, right? Isn't Illinois State? Isn't that its history? Is, wasn't it a normal school?

QUINDRY: Yeah, that's right. Yeah. As was East Tennessee state where I was in the Quillen College of Medicine, but the broader university was a former normal school. But the point is, we, and this is prior to me coming here, had to figure out what do we, formerly health and human performance, and now IPAT, what are we, who are we, what do we want to do? And it turned out that 85% of our students are headed to Health and Allied Health careers. And in that perspective, we aligned better with College of Health. But there are still thriving programs at other universities where they say Phys Ed and fitness and coaching and performance are still who we, the academic unit, are. And if that was the case here, we should have remained in the College of Ed, but since who we identify as faculty and certainly our students as health professionals or allied health professionals, we realigned in the way that best fit our students and our faculty.

KINCH: Yeah. And you also now have this new Ph.D. proposal and I kind of want you to talk a little bit about how that unfolded and, and what it starts to look like, you know, cause it’s again, focused a little bit more on a, kind of, rehabilitation model, right? So, so talk about that new program and what your hopes are for it.

QUINDRY: Yeah. The new, the Ph.D. program is called Integrative Physiology and Rehabilitation Sciences. And the idea is that we can make exercise physiologists to some extent biomechanists or athletic trainers, to some extent, but what we're really doing is creating a new generation of professional school faculty. So, athletic trainers, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and it could bleed into some other health and allied health professions. But, we want to prepare the next generation faculty member who can then better train our type students. So, our students get a four-year degree with us in IPAT, and then they head onto PT, OT, AT, maybe medical school, maybe physician assistant. And, knowing that exercise in itself can be a religion and that can be problematic. I mean, exercise is just exercise. But if everybody was at least physically active, if not performing formal exercise, the morbidity and mortality that is lifestyle driven would go down dramatically. It's one of the few components: eat right, get exercise, sleep. Don't do things in excess like alcohol. This is one of the cornerstones of lifestyle that can alter the way the world lives and works. And, and, and so if we can—getting back on topic here -- if we can put a certain number of our faculty into all the key professional school programs to bring that lifestyle medicine approach, which includes exercise to PT, AT, OT, physician's assistant, then we can change the world in a better way. And we're not, we're not trying to change all PTs we're just trying to have that voice be included in the broader physical therapy narrative, for example.

KINCH: Yeah, but this kind of goes back to your point about ideals. I mean that there is an ideal behind that, right? That the ideal is a sort of transforming a culture and thinking about ways to strategically use research and the training of great teachers to kind of fan out and bring that influence to other spaces.

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KINCH: We end every episode the same way. These are the quick hitters. It's an either or.

QUINDRY: Yep.

KINCH: You ready for em?

QUINDRY: Yes.

KINCH: Morning or night?

QUINDRY: Morning.

KINCH: Bitterroot or Clark Fork?

QUINDRY: Ohhh. Clark fork.

KINCH: Sunrise or sunset?

QUINDRY: Sunset.

KINCH: This one's a trilogy: Bitterroots, Pintlers, or Missions?

QUINDRY: Pintlers.

KINCH: Yellowstone or Glacier?

QUINDRY: Glacier.

KINCH: Winter or Summer?

QUINDRY: Winter.

KINCH: Yeah. You can feel it in the air now, huh?

QUINDRY: Oh, it’s just magical.

KINCH: I went skiing yesterday. It was so fantastic.

QUINDRY: Yeah. I've been out three times already. It's been magical.

KINCH: It's a good November. It's been a while since we've had a November with this much snow that it's sticking around. It's kind of nice. Alright, here's the toughest either or—comes out of nowhere. Best G Love and Special Sauce song: Baby's Got Sauce or Cold Beverage?

QUINDRY: I'll say Cold Beverage.

KINCH: You ever seen them live?

QUINDRY: Several times, yeah, and in Missoula.

KINCH: Oh, is that right?

QUINDRY: Yep. They played at the Top Hat.

KINCH: Oh, that’s right.

QUINDRY: In fact, I had tickets or did I? Yeah, they were going to play here in March of this year and it was canceled last minute due to COVID.

KINCH: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I saw him a few times back in the day. First time I saw them, what it was so impressed me was, you know, there's a certain musical style that is simple in its expression, but underneath it is this whole tradition. And, you know, the jazz that lay underneath his drummer was there and every, every stroke. And so there just, there was a richness and a texture to it, even though it was like also really fun and really danceable and, you know, obviously drew a lot of people out. But there was a real subtlety to the music.

QUINDRY: That's, that's what I like. And it's almost like the Integrative Physiology of music. I mean it's hip hop, blues, it's jazz infused. It's upright bass. It's so unconventional in different ways.

KINCH: Yeah. Unconventional, but then like really traditional. Like everything you just listed is this deep root in the American music tradition, but then it's an unconventional combination of them.

QUINDRY: Yeah. And, and somehow palatable to people from different walks of life.

KINCH: Well, that's it. Thank you.

QUINDRY: Thanks so much.

KINCH: Yeah, thank you.

KINCH: We hope you enjoyed your time floating on the river of knowledge with us. If you enjoyed this episode, give us a like on SoundCloud, and stop by the University of Montana Grad School website at www.umt.edu/grad, for more episodes and videos highlighting our amazing graduate students.