# Health and Human Science Matters Season 4, Episode 7: Maria Delgado

Maria: Because of my appreciation for technology, I'm so appreciative of the resources that we have, because the Nancy Richardson Design Center is like a building I have not experienced before. With the HTC Vive headsets, and the full integration room. And the computer teaching lab that I teach in is amazing. This sounds silly, but the laptops come up, they go down, the computer desktops. We have so many amazing resources that I hope to really encourage the students to not take lightly, because a lot of other schools don't have that facility. With access to technology, you can do more.

Avery: Welcome to Health and Human Science Matters, a podcast by Colorado State University's College of Health and Human Sciences. I'm your co-host and digital media strategist, Avery Martin.

Matt: And I'm Matt Hickey, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies. At our college we make at our mission to optimize human health and wellbeing through discovery and innovation. Don't just take our word for it, each episode we sit down with people who fulfill that mission, our college faculty and staff. And today we're lucky enough to have a friend and colleague, Maria Delgado. Maria's in the Interior Architecture and Design program, which is housed in the Department of Design and Merchandising. So Maria, welcome.

Maria: Thank you. Thank you for having me.

Matt: Yes. Well, we're glad it worked out. We are always keen to hear the stories from this really interesting and eclectic, diverse college. We're looking forward to the next hour or so where we get to know you a little bit better. We want to start with your sense of the big ideas that you pursue in terms of your scholarship. We want our listeners to hear. And as you and I both know I'm a fan. We've had an opportunity to talk about and look for ways to support the kind of work that you do. And in fact, just five minutes ago we were talking more about ways in which your program can grow. Tell our listeners what your research focus is all about.

Maria: Yes, absolutely. Thank you for the question. My PhD focused on looking at residential housing specific to older adults. How can we make homes accessible? Through that lens, we have a large increasing shareholder population of Colorado older adults. One of the best things to be able to help support living autonomously is really, how do we design a home to support that? Through that lens, I'm looking at accessible housing and then also trying to, whenever possible, integrate technology perspectives in it, and being able to share that information.

Matt: Now, is that technology on the build end of the spectrum or technology on the resident user end of the spectrum, the Alexas of the world and-

Maria: It's both.

Matt: Okay.

Maria: Yeah, great question. Really looking at, for example, this semester my students are constructing a tiny house on wheels. It's through the Nancy Richardson Design Center. It's the IDEA 450 capstone course. And really, we used technology in the beginning because we reached out to the Center for Healthy Aging to invite older adults to come and virtually experience the home. So we were able to 3D model. All the users that we had had, had never used virtual reality before. So first it was about what is the process of doing this, and feeling really comfortable in it. Then our users were able to walk through the building and provide their perspective, and we were able to update the home so it really, truly was user-centered design, which was really neat.

And then we integrate technology throughout when we're talking about what types of products could we integrate in the home. A lot of the concepts with accessibility are tied to universal design. Thinking about how can we integrate products that help us to, again, just have the most control possible? For example, Moen products, Moen Faucet products, there are kind of like a water ecosystem, if you will, where you can tell the faucet, "I want half a cup of water." It's voice activated, so anytime we can integrate smart technology, or just the consideration of what types of materials we're having, we're trying to be able to do that and just share that information.

Matt: That's cool.

Maria: Yeah.

Matt: Do you talk to your faucet?

Avery: Not yet.

Matt: Not yet?

Avery: Not yet, but maybe one day.

Maria: Right? Yeah, that's the thing. Some of these products are relatively affordable, so I think it's about just having the idea of, "Oh, I could change something in my home and make it more comfortable for me to use." I think that's part of the conversation, just creating an awareness. And the more popular something gets, the more common and then the more affordable it is. And then with that piece, really we're trying to share as much information as possible, which again ties to your question of the technology. On the post-end, what our intention is with this house is to take a 3D scan of it using our Matterport camera, which is a digital twin scanning camera. It'll take essentially 360-degree photos that stitches it together to build a scene, that then people can virtually experience. And what's neat about the 3D scan is that you can also augment it, so you can integrate different information that then again points out the education. For example, talking about the faucet, I could link to a product specification, or I could link to a video that shows the educational process of it, or talks about the cost, or whatever it might be. But the virtual component really allows this information to be shared on a larger platform.

Matt: Yeah. That is so cool.

Avery: That is sweet. Yeah.

Matt: We tend to take many things for granted in the academy. I'm as guilty of that as anybody. So would you tell our listeners more about Tiny Homes?

Maria: Yeah, absolutely. My first experience with a tiny home was when I was at CU Denver getting my PhD. I was biking with a friend downtown, and I biked past a tiny house village. And I was like, "What is this?" It was so interesting to me. And what I learned about it, there were 120-square-foot dwelling units, and it's a village in the sense that they're little, independent dwelling units, and then shared common spaces. This was called the Beloved Village Community, and it was Denver's first tiny house village that was helping to transition individuals experiencing homelessness out of homelessness. And to me, I was intrigued not only by that mission, but also by how a tiny home could be a really good learning experience in the term of size and scope for students.

We had collaborated to see if we could build one of their next tiny house villages because they wanted to create a second one. But then Covid happened.

Avery: Covid, of course.

Maria: Yeah. But it was great because we actually kept that relationship. And then I graduated and got a job at CSU, and we were able, through the IDEA 450 course, able to explore tiny homes. And I think that tiny homes are really valuable right now because it's an alternative option for living. And really, I think the important part is trying to create more awareness. Because not all of our land use code updates will allow for tiny homes. There's important considerations for jurisdiction and what municipalities... what are the restrictions or what are the obstacles that we need to overcome in order to make tiny homes more accessible, if that is something that the city is interested in? I think that tiny homes might not be for everybody. B.

Ut they're could be really great for an individual that wants to downsize, maybe, or just thinking about having, even if you wanted to have your house and have your tiny home considered as an accessory dwelling unit, and then have someone that's a caretaker live in that smaller space, or if you just want to rent it out and have passive income, or whatever it might be, everyone has a different reason. But I think that considering tiny homes and the legislation that is a part of it is really a timely topic right now.

Matt: I'll say. Now, is there a generally accepted industry standard about no-bigger-than square footage?

Maria: Right, so no more than 400 square feet.

Matt: Interesting.

Maria: And that can come in different capacities. And really, it depends again on your jurisdiction. But when we talk about the 400 square feet, we're really thinking about the trailer restriction. For tiny homes on wheels, typically, you'll see that most of them are eight feet wide because then you don't have to get a special permit. The first house that we did was 8 feet by 10 feet, which was really tiny. We added a loft, which helped. But the second bill that we're doing, we purchased a trailer that's 10 foot by 24 feet. And that two feet doesn't sound like a lot, but it really allows for... We're designing this home as if we had a user that was within a wheelchair. When you are looking at it through that lens, you have to think about your turning radius.

Your turning circle used to be five feet, but now it's increased to five feet, seven inches. And it's interesting because when we talk about ADA and accessibility, there are differences. ADA really is referencing public spaces. But when we talk about accessibility, which we use the codes of ANSI 117.1, so one 117.1. We're really talking about, in a way ADA, but for residential spaces. How can we maximize within the small space as much space to make it user-friendly? For example, the dwelling unit in Denver that was limited to 120 square feet. So there's differences in that sense, and there's so many different types of tiny homes. There could be permanent tiny homes as opposed to ones on trailers. But there's a lot of options, which is great.

Matt: I'll say. Now, because we may have listeners who want to wander by during the auction period-

Maria: Absolutely.

Matt: Tell us a little bit about what's coming later this semester.

Maria: Yes, okay, absolutely. When we ran this first class, it was exciting and also a really fabulous learning experience. We ran the class Monday, Wednesday, and then asked these students, can you volunteer on Saturdays? Can we call it our homework days? And all build together, because this is such a collaborative process. And for safety, safety is always our number one priority. The teachers need to be there on site. But one of the differences we did is this semester we stacked the class time. All of the labs are on Saturdays from 9:00 to 4:00, so we can really maximize having the students together. We have less times that we're setting up and tearing down. Everybody gets the training at the same time, so it's really more efficient. The intention is to auction off the home and have it be a home that someone lives in. That's what we did for the last tiny house. And it actually was purchased by two CSU alumni that are living just outside of Fort Collins.

Matt: Oh, wow.

Maria: Yeah, in the tiny house.

Matt: Yeah.

Avery: [inaudible 00:11:18]. That's awesome.

Maria: Yeah.

Matt: So one other thing I want to hear about is a little bit more about your Spur proposal. So for our listeners, again, the Spur Campus is a fantastic new addition to the CSU system. It's a campus that's down in metro Denver area near where the National Western Stock Show is. And it's been ribbon cutting a series of fantastic buildings over the last year. And Spur has been inviting proposals from Fort Collins campus faculty to do programming down on the Spur campus. And your proposal is intriguing to me, so I'd like you to share some more about that.

Maria: Yeah, I'd love to share it. Another lens, I feel like I have a pocket of this tiny house, and then I also have a pocket of just always technology and the appreciation of architecture, and sharing architecture. I developed something called CSU's Architecture Virtual Library. It can be found through the Design and Merchandising website. And the intention of that page is really to educate individuals, K-12, older adults, on architecture and architecture history. And it started through analyzing nine buildings on CSU's campus, and has grown to different cities. We've worked with the Office of Engagement and Extension, and have piloted our first off-campus city, which was Sterling, and then it grew to Central City. And I'm so excited to announce we'll run two new internships this coming summer and add Pueblo and Glenwood Springs to the list.

Matt: Oh, wow.

Avery: Oh, yes. Oh yes.

Matt: That's great.

Maria: Yeah, yeah. From that, I was intrigued about the Spur campus. I love architecture, the buildings were so neat to me. So I went over summer, last summer, just to get a tour. And I kind of got inspired and the thought, okay, how could maybe we link CSU AVL to the buildings? I submitted, as you mentioned, I submitted a proposal to Spur. And the vision is that we expand and utilize the AVL to help promote architecture across the state. There's three main components. First, we want to scan Spur, so actually use our 3D modeling technology to 3D scan the buildings and apply the same concepts that we do with the CSU AVL. With the AVL, we scan the buildings, we do a lot of research about the buildings. That actually helps us to identify which buildings have the most rich information, that creates a really cool tour.

And then we embed that information in a legend. The legend includes different, for example, floor plans are orange, materials are green, gray is published articles. We want to transfer that information to the scans of Spur. But because Spur is a brand new building, we get an opportunity to work with industry and use their floor plans and learn all about what are the state-of-the-art features. And what's neat about having a digital scan is that we can not only host that on the CSU AVL website, but we can get it to Spur, and they can host it on their website. It increases accessibility because not everybody across the state or in the world can attend Spur, but they can have that VR experience and feel as though that they're a part of it. And really with the information that we cultivate, that we curate in the model, they can have a sense of what Spur is all about. That kind of is the augment Spur. First we scan Spur, then we augment Spur, and then the third goal is to really share Spur.

The idea is that we would have a little Ram van that I want to add a custom lift to, that then we can have a laptop cart, which is similar to the laptop cart that the college has, with some headsets, some VR headsets, some Oculus, and some Samsungs. And we can drive this little Spur van, which I'm open to names. I don't have names. I'm just calling it Spur Van, I think for now. But just drive the Spur van to intentional locations. Really, we want to start with schools, K through 12 schools, and identify first, what are schools that don't have the means to come to Spur? What are schools that don't have the access to this type of technology? And really create an experience for the students so that they're able to try something new.

And the other component of this that we've started last summer with the website, the CSU AVL, is that we are creating worksheets essentially, if you will. A worksheet that's a scavenger hunt that curates an experience for the student, or a crossword puzzles for elementary students that they can go through the VR model and find different buttons that answer the question. Really, it's about not just sharing, but having it be a very educational experience.

Matt: Exactly.

Maria: Yeah. And what I'd love to do is now start to tailor and bring in a lot more STEM education. Think about, how can we use buildings to talk? Because the virtual reality has a really neat feature where you can measure distances, so really start to think about, how can we add math equations? And how can we get students to start thinking about ergonomics, and furniture, sizing, and square footage of space, and programming? I think there's a lot of potential there, and I'm so excited.

Matt: You took the words right out of my mouth.

Avery: So many possibilities. That's incredible.

Maria: Yeah, yeah, I'm so excited about it. So send me good vibes, fingers crossed.

Avery: Yes, yes, absolutely. We're thinking about the future and inspiring future generations, but let's rewind the clock a little bit. Let's look at young Maria, whether that's elementary or even pre-K. What initially inspired you to pursue architecture and the arts, and combining the two? What was the first nugget of inspiration?

Maria: That's a cool question. I did my K through 12 at Poudre School District, which I think is pretty fun.

Avery: I did as well.

Maria: Nice.

Avery: Yeah.

Maria: Yeah. And I remember having a conversation with my dad when I was in fourth grade and thinking, I always liked to... Talking about sketching, the sketching class. I always liked sketching. I always liked drawing. I thought I was pretty, I think in a way, creative. And I always appreciated different home designs. And I don't know why that really spoke to me, but I was always interested in home design. And my dad one time in the car was like, "Well, that's what an architect does. An architect designs home." And I was like, oh, okay. I want to be an architect.

Avery: That's what I'm going to be. Yeah.

Maria: Yeah, so I always wanted to get my master's in architecture. Really what was neat about it is when I was a high school student in Colorado, there wasn't a five-year accredited architecture program. But we had CU Denver, which was a master's in architecture. And I really wanted to stay at CSU for my undergrad because this is where my family was, and I'm a homebody. I met with an advisor in the master's program, and she informed me that I could major in anything, construction management, interior design, whatever it was, and then get my master's and it would take an extra year, but you could still achieve the masters.

Avery: Oh, yeah, that's great.

Maria: Yeah, and so I picked construction management because it transferred the most credits over, so I had 27 credits transfer over. And it kind of was just really a neat opportunity to be able to have that collaboration between the two programs.

Avery: Absolutely.

Maria: Yeah. I don't know how it came about, but just an appreciation of architecture, I think is what inspired me to think about that.

Avery: That's awesome.

Maria: It's interesting how these little moments or experiences impact your outcome.

Avery: Yeah. Talk a little bit about your undergrad being a CM major.

Maria: Sure. It was awesome.

Avery: Great.

Maria: I loved construction management. It was interesting to me just because it was such a good foundation in terms of materials and how buildings are put together. And just in a perspective of, how do you put together a building? How do you project manage this process? How do you integrate estimating, be mindful of every penny? And all these things. The undergrad was a really great experience, and I would redo it all over again. It really set me, I think, with a strong foundation for an appreciation of just architecture and an understanding.

Matt: We love our friends in CM.

Maria: Yes, we do.

Avery: Absolutely.

Matt: If I may, tell me a little bit more about your family. What do your folks do? Is your dad an architect and he wanted to-

Maria: You know what, so my dad is a super scientist. He works with USDA ARS, and he's actually faculty affiliated with CSU.

Matt: Cool.

Avery: Oh, nice.

Matt: I'm going to go look him up.

Avery: Yeah.

Maria: Courtney Delgado. Yeah.

Avery: Awesome.

Maria: He had received his PhD and postdoc from LSU, and I think having that kind of as an example to me was probably impactful. And then my mom, she has just been such a foundational force, I think with... There's four kids in my family.

Matt: That was my next question.

Maria: Yeah, yeah. And I think she was pretty awesome about finding out, okay, this is what this one likes, and this is what this one likes, and then just letting that flourish, trying to provide support. I have a very supportive family, I would say, which is really a neat experience.

Matt: That's great.

Avery: Fantastic.

Matt: Now tell us about your siblings. Where do you fit in the...

Maria: I'm third down.

Matt: Me too.

Maria: Oh, nice. Yeah. I have older brother, older sister, me, and then a younger sister.

Matt: And what do they do?

Maria: Well, so my older brother is a chemical engineer, and he is so fun. Actually, all of us graduated from CSU, and so yeah.

Avery: Yeah, love to hear that.

Maria: Yeah. He studied chemical engineering, and then went into drinking water. And it was so funny when he got his first job, he had a little water test kit and was like, "Do you want me to test your water?" Like, I'm okay. But I was thinking, gosh, I should loop him into SPUR in the water building.

Avery: For sure.

Matt: Right.

Maria: Yeah. And then my older sister, she studied pharmacy and is a pharmacist. And my younger sister studied mechanical engineering, and she works with Schneider Electric.

Avery: My goodness.

Maria: Yeah. It's fun to, I think, have siblings and grow up with that and that mindset.

Matt: Growing up in Fort Collins is not half bad.

Maria: No.

Matt: My daughter, of course did. And she went here as well.

Maria: Yes.

Matt: For art, graphic design.

Maria: Oh, cool.

Matt: Similarity, she [inaudible 00:21:53].

Avery: Yeah, yeah. Indeed.

Maria: Yeah. It's interesting. I always think it's was interesting to grow up in Fort Collins and experience K through 12 and then go to college in Fort Collins. That felt like two different worlds in a way. But it's neat to have experience both of that.

Avery: Yeah. Yeah, I describe it as unlocking another part of the city.

Maria: Yes. That's a wonderful description.

Avery: Yeah.

Maria: I grew up going to CSU as a student, as you probably did too, with just field trips or with activities. I think it was neat to experience CSU in a different capacity.

Avery: For sure.

Maria: And it's ironic now to be back as a teacher. The first time I came back I was like, wow, this is surreal. It's a neat experience.

Matt: Talk to us about mentors. This may be in CM, it may be in the DM. We're always interested in influences. I see my profession in a particular way because of professor so and so, et cetera.

Maria: Yes. Mentors are amazing. And I've had quite a few throughout my life. One in particular who continues to be just an avid mentor is Leo Darnell. He works at CU Denver, and I think through Leo's lens, he was not a teacher, but works as the Associate Dean with Academic Student Success. And so through that lens, he taught me so much about how a university system works, because you're not really thinking that. When I was a PhD student, I wasn't really understanding my school as a business, or understanding my school as... I was understanding school as school. This is where I go. It was really neat to have him introduce me to so many different types of just information about the system and how the system works. And I think that was eye-opening in a lot of different ways, and just has always provided a solid sense of guidance. And whenever I have questions or thoughts, he's just such a solid individual to go to. And he continues to be an amazing mentor. I'm really grateful to have him in my life.

Avery: That's great.

Matt: Blessings for sure.

Maria: Yes. Yeah.

Matt: While you were in the PhD program, you presumably were beginning thoughts about, where do I land next? I'd like to teach, I want to influence students. Similar ways to how I've been influenced and given the narrative so far. CSU was clearly on your mind, right?

Maria: Yeah.

Matt: But the things on my mind or that I would hope to do don't always align. The stars often have to align. So talk to us about the transition from the PhD program back home.

Maria: Talking about stars aligning, I do think it was kind of a meant to be. I had graduated from CU Denver with my PhD in design and planning, and I was hired by the chancellor's office to run to be faculty director for City Center, which was a unit at CU Denver that helps to create community connections. Which really, I think fit well because I'm such a believer in having community projects and co-created projects, so it was really a great space for me to be in. And that was the first time that I had transitioned from being GPTI, which was graduate part-time instructor, to a lecturer. And I feel like throughout the PhD, I learned how to teach a little bit. I learned, oh, this is the how to put together a syllabus. Oh, this is how you think about-

Matt: Now, were you comfortable immediately in the classroom?

Maria: With anything, it takes time.

Matt: Sure, sure.

Maria: Yeah. I do think I love teaching. To me, I love teaching. Knowledge is power. Yes, but I think learning the structure of, oh, I always want to be professional and I always want to... So it's like you learning those things as you're teaching. And it just really was a great experience to be able to study and then teach, and have this really supportive network. Then when I transitioned from lecture, it was actually an individual in the PhD program that was like, "Hey, I know your family and you were from Fort Collins. I saw this job posting, I think you should apply."

Matt: Oh, fantastic.

Maria: And I was like, yeah. So on the last day I was like, okay, I just applied. And it kind of was-

Matt: And this was 20...

Maria: 2018, because I started working in 2019. It was funny because every time I ran into him in the elevator and was like, "Hey, I got a Zoom interview."

And he's like, "Oh my gosh."

And the next time I saw him, "Hey, I got invited to campus."

Avery: Giving updates every time.

Maria: Yeah, yeah, so it was really, truly meant to be. And I'm so grateful to have this job. Because throughout this job, I have learned a lot. I had never used virtual reality before this job. The building that we're in has phenomenal resources and so much support to be able to try new things and explore. Just that alone, I'm grateful. And I think because the more I know, then the more I can share it with the students, and then it just becomes a really fun experience.

Matt: So you started in August of 2019?

Maria: Yes.

Matt: As did I, in my current role, the other role goes back 26 years. But few weeks into your second semester, life got interesting in ways we could not have imagined.

Maria: Wow, yeah. Take the words right out of my mouth. Because honestly, I think I didn't even complete a full year. And then we were teaching remote. And in a way, I try to always be positive and think silver lining. From a teacher perspective, silver lining of Covid is, I thought I knew Canvas, but after the training-

Avery: You really got to know it.

Maria: Yeah. I'm like, oh my gosh, we learned so much now with Echo 360 and all this technology, the remote in computer access, all these things that have made us, I think, more efficient and be able to really maximize our time more, and to be really clear with our students with course content, all this information. From that lens, it was interesting. I think it was empowering and great. From a lens of community, I think it was a little bit more difficult.

Avery: I agree.

Maria: Because I didn't realize this during the time, but once we started coming back, I'm like, oh my gosh, I am now meeting people across campus through these networking events. I guess you just really appreciate being able to not be siloed. And really be able to build connections, and meet people, and collaborate. I think that is just something that I take away from Covid.

Matt: Let's talk about that last observation about building connections, and meeting people, and collaborating.

Maria: Yes.

Matt: Talk to us about a day in the life of Maria Delgado. Students, maybe partners that you collaborate with on campus, or elsewhere for that matter.

Maria: Yes. Yeah. Well, so any type of industry collaboration, I try to bring in through classroom connections. Try to bring in real clients to have the students design. Through that capacity, that lens is really neat in terms of providing a unique, high-impact experience for the students. With the IDEA tiny House class, we do a lot of collaboration with industry as well, because we are seeking funds. We have our Ram Funder page, which we tap into our student network and explain the project, and we build a lot of connections. Just yesterday, Toll Brothers donated $100 to the page and was like, "Can you connect us with your industry people? And we want to hire some CSU students, we're coming to the CM career fair." It's neat how something small can really build and expand.

And through teachers, through colleagues, I actually last semester started the Engage Scholars Academy. And that has been awesome too, because I've met some really neat people and we put together an idea and submitted a proposal, and hopefully that gets funded. But it's fun to be able to build these relationships and think, because really, you can do so much, but when you work with more people, you could really do so much.

Matt: Yeah, absolutely.

Maria: You can make more of a positive impact.

Matt: If you project next five years, things that you would like to see happen related to your activities as a teacher, mentor, scholar, et cetera.

Maria: Yes. Well, I would love to continue to build the CSU AVL and provide more internships to students. Because I think that these internships really give them an amazing experience just to learn. And they are pushed too. They are continuing to learn new technology advances. So I'd love to expand it through that lens, in terms of the student research perspective. With my, the CSU AVL, the Spur grant, I could envision that going to so many different schools. I'd love to be able to grow on a big scale. If we continue to get more money, funds outside, external funds, how can we maximize that and maybe get more vans? And have more people going or collaborating with Spur and teaching them how to use the technology and how to multiply that. Just different ways to, I think, expand would really be where my primary focus is.

Matt: Now, bearing in mind that we are recording this for posterity.

Maria: Oh, yes.

Matt: Would you care to hazard a guess about how many miles the Spur van has on it five years from now?

Maria: I know, I know.

Avery: Many, yes.

Matt: No county untouched.

Maria: Yes.

Avery: That's right.

Matt: Beyond that, wouldn't it be cool if no school district untouched in the entire state of Colorado, right?

Avery: Yes.

Maria: Yes. Onto that point, that's why we want to be really strategic about these trips. How can we maximize, maybe look geographically, try to consolidate so that we can reach as many different school districts. Yeah, that's a lot. So fun.

Matt: Someday.

Avery: Yes.

Maria: Yes.

Avery: Looking forward to it for sure.

Maria: Yes.

Matt: Now I'm going to circle back to a little more about your family, if I can, before we jump back into academia. Of course, we've talked about your parents and your siblings. But tell us about you, your family. You talked about commuting from Broomfield.

Maria: Yes, yes. My husband and I, we bought our home in Broomfield, pre-Covid. At the time, we thought, this is amazing. He works in Denver. He's a lawyer in Denver. Since I have the summers off, if you will, and he's commuting all the time, we thought that seems fair. 25 minutes for him, and then like 45 minutes for me, or an hour. But then Covid happened, and now he's working totally remote. Basically one day a week. It's kind of been funny, so we've been tossing around the idea of, could we move back to Fort Collins? Should we?

Matt: It has enduring appeal, doesn't it?

Avery: Yes.

Maria: Yeah. Yeah, it does. But right now, yeah, we live in Broomfield and it's been fun just to get to know a new space, and get to know a new community. And I love our neighbors, and it's really just a fun time. It does make me more compassionate and sensitive to commuting. I have to be more mindful. And I definitely do encourage students, if you feel unsafe, everything's recorded. We have now different avenues, again, because post-Covid, we have different means to get to the same goal. But that's where we're at.

Matt: We talk a lot about work-life balance. I always like hearing these stories about life outside of campus and things that interest us. If you think about recreational, and I'm not thinking about tiny homes or work-related stuff, what do you like to do with your husband?

Maria: That's one of the things that I so love about my husband, because I think I tend to sometimes work a lot. I love my work, so I think it's easy to work a lot. And he helps me to make time for fun stuff.

Matt: Good.

Maria: And when I say fun stuff, even just watch TV, just relax, hang out. That's so fun. We like to travel to the mountains. He likes to ski. I'm not very good at skiing, but I like to go.

Avery: Nice.

Maria: So we make-

Matt: It's a great state for skiing.

Maria: Yes.

Avery: My goodness, yes.

Maria: Yes, yes. Yeah. So we make time to do fun stuff during the winters, and spend time with family, and just hang out, relax.

Matt: Great.

Avery: And are you watching a lot of HGTV?

Maria: Actually, I do. Yes. Joanna Gaines, I love.

Avery: Yes. Nice.

Maria: Yeah. Of course. Yeah.

Avery: Yeah. I always flip by Tiny House Nation.

Maria: Oh, yes.

Avery: And I always think, I know a tiny houser. I know somebody that makes those.

Maria: You know what? I hope that they have a sixth season for that. I've watched it before in the past. Yeah. And it's funny, through Extension Agent Connection, actually just two weeks ago I got an email and then she's like, "Oh my gosh, I just met one of the producers of Tiny House Nation." And we were like, oh, isn't that fun? I'm like, and what if something could materialize? You never know, just with anything in life, one connection leads to something else. And full circle.

Matt: Being open to opportunities.

Maria: For sure. Absolutely.

Matt: A nice posture to have.

Avery: Exactly.

Maria: For sure. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Avery: If there's a producer listening, there's an opportunity.

Maria: Yeah. Email.

Avery: Do a season at Fort Collins. Yeah.

Matt: Back to the professional domain. I've got two questions related to this sort of layered environment we find ourselves in here at CSU. Talk to us about what you appreciate the most about being a faculty member in the College of Health and Human Sciences.

Maria: Okay. I feel like there's two things that come immediately to mind. Number one, my students. Because that's why I'm here. Certainly from that lens, I appreciate them. Because through them, I learn more. Through them, I'm challenged to learn more and share more in. They're just amazing, the students. And I think also too, just because of my appreciation for appreciation for technology, I'm so appreciative of the resources that we have. Because the Nancy Richardson Design Center is like a building I have not experienced before with the HTC Vive headsets, and the full integration room. And just the computer teaching lab that I teach in is amazing. This sounds silly, but the desks, the laptops come up, that they go down, the computer desktops. It's just, we have so many amazing resources that I hope to really encourage the students to not take lightly. Because a lot of other schools don't have that facility. With a lot of technology, with access to technology, you can do more.

Matt: Here here.

Maria: Yeah.

Matt: Well said.

Maria: Yeah.

Matt: We all find ourselves working at this wonderful institution called Colorado State University, and we lead with our land grant mission, and rightly so, and have as long as I've been here. And that's one of many things that appeals to me, that it's not just lip service. We take that land grant mission seriously. So tell us what the land grant mission means to you.

Maria: Yes. To me, I think it's so much about access, providing access across the state of Colorado. Doing whatever I can to share knowledge, to share information, to make an impact, to excite people about CSU, or excite people about maybe coming to CSU, or not. Just learning about. Really, I think increasing awareness, increasing access, that to me is some of the rooted elements of the land grant mission. And I'm so grateful for the Office of Engagement and Extension that allows me to build those connections and make those bridges, because that is so unique. So many universities don't have the structure model, and through them, it's such an outreach. I really appreciate that perspective and that kind of set up from the land grant institution.

Matt: Well, Maria, this has been so much fun. We've been looking forward to this, and we're glad it fit into your schedule.

Maria: Yes, thank you for having me.

Matt: Thanks for coming and spending some time with us. We appreciate it.

Maria: Absolutely. Thank you for having me. This was awesome.

Matt: We'll be looking forward to good news from our friends at Spur.

Maria: Nice. Keep me posted.

Avery: Yes indeed. Love to. Thank you so much.

Matt: Thanks for coming.

Maria: Thank you.

Matt: Another great interview is in the books. Thank you for listening to this episode of Health and Human Science Matters.

Avery: Stay tuned for the next episode, it's on the way. In the meantime, go listen to our episodes from seasons 1, 2, and 3. And if you want to learn more about our CSU College of Health and Human Sciences, go to www.chhs.coloostate.edu.