

A Bill of Success



After receiving an invitation to join the faculty, Bennett said he quickly decided it would be a beneficial step in his professional life. He said his love for Texas Tech grew gradually after joining the faculty and learning of the university's great potential.

"At first, I didn't really know what to expect from the students," Bennett said. "It didn't take long to realize that they were fine young people."

Bennett said the overall inspiring factor for him was the students themselves. He was able to see the great ability they had and wanted to help them to reach their highest potential.

Bennett came to Texas Tech in 1968 as a professor of agronomy; he then served as the Associate Dean for Academic Programs from 1970 to 1984. In 1984, he became the Director of Development until his retirement in 1997. During his time at Texas Tech, he built a foundation for the operations within the college.

One of Bennett's most well-known accomplishments is the establishment of the Agri-Techsans program. Bennett's idea for the program was to present an opportunity at Texas Tech for outstanding students, such as state FFA and 4-H officers, to help him recruit other exceptional students.

According to the CASNR website, Agri-Techsans serve as the official student recruiters for Texas Tech's CASNR. The organization is comprised of undergraduate students who represent each department within CASNR. The students each bring a unique perspective to the organization because they come from many

different backgrounds, ranging from large metropolitan areas to small rural towns in Texas and other states across the nation.

The idea of the Agri-Techsans program came to Bennett on the way home from the 1974 annual agronomy meeting in Salt Lake City.

"I was riding with Dr. Bertrand, and I brought up the idea to him," Bennett said. "He liked the idea of both the Ag Ambassador and Agri-Techsans programs."

Bennett said he first had to discuss the idea with faculty and those who would be involved. Once the idea was approved, it became a reality.

"With time, it became apparent that there would need to be adequate time spent recruiting," Bennett said. "So, that was the purpose - to recruit for Texas Tech, and agriculture, too."

Cindy Akers, associate professor of agricultural communications and Director of the Dr. Bill Bennett Student Success Center, said that Dr. Bennett is a visionary.

"We were one of the first colleges that started using student recruiters, which are our Agri-Techsans," Akers said.

Bennett's philosophy for the student recruiting programs was founded upon the belief that students are best recruited by their peers.

"They are an essential tool to the success of our recruiting within the college," Akers said, "because a high school student is going to ask an Agri-Techsans questions that they would never ask me."

Bennett joked that the students who participate in the Agri-Techsans program are equivalent to Texas Tech's football team's top recruits.

"I often told people they were our top football recruits, so to speak," Bennett said, "because they were the cream of the crop."

According to Rachel Bobbitt, Coordinator of Student Programs, the idea of the Agri-Techsans program is first to promote higher education, then promote Texas Tech as a means of higher education and, lastly, promote CASNR at Texas Tech.

Akers said that Bennett has done a tremendous amount to better the college experience for CASNR students, including herself when she was a student of the college.

"As a student here, I was benefitted by the works of Dr. Bennett," Akers said. "I, myself, was involved in Agri-Techsans as an undergraduate."

The decision to rename the center was made in a meeting of the Provost and CASNR faculty members held in February 2011.

Shirley Garrison, Distinguished Alumnus of CASNR, reflected on Bennett's "uncanny foresight."

"Throughout Bill's long and distinguished period of service at Texas Tech, he has consistently demonstrated an unselfish devotion to his responsibilities and to the college and university that is truly exceptional," Garrison said.

Continuing, Garrison said, "Within Bill, there exists a tremendous storehouse of knowledge and wisdom

with respect to the numerous policies, practices and procedures he has helped to make successful."

Akers said Bennett is a man who truly bleeds red and black.

"He's somebody that we all need to look to and aspire to be like," she said. "I would hope that after I retire I've had that much of an impact on not only students, but also on a program." **T**



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