



CHIEF OF CASNR

Working as the Coordinator of Undergraduate Programs, Ramona Johnson is an icon in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR). For 20 years, she has assisted students in filing degree plans, handling transfer credits, ensuring proper course substitutions, and, ultimately, graduating. Johnson has perhaps the most important job in CASNR—ensure that students graduate.

“Help them graduate. That’s the goal, seeing that every student that comes through here receives their degree,” Johnson said.

Anything to do with student academics generally starts with Johnson, but this is something that she does not mind. Like any other job, there is paperwork and an administrative side to her job, but what Johnson enjoys the most is her interaction with the students.

“I have an open door policy, so they don’t have to have an appointment to come in. I like that. I like the spontaneity of never knowing what my day may bring,” Johnson said.

Johnson believes that CASNR students are the best group of students on campus, and working with them is the best part of her job.

“Although we have some difficulties, for the most part the students are great, and I enjoy visiting with them and helping them out,” Johnson said.

Former Associate Dean for Academic and Student Affairs, Dr. Norman Hopper, called Johnson the “chief advisor of CASNR”.

“When anyone in this college, whether it is faculty, staff, or students, thinks of an individual in the advising role, they automatically, first and foremost think of Ramona,” Dr. Hopper said.

Dr. Hopper believes that Johnson knows the advising scheme of the college better than anyone else. She understands the process from an inclusive viewpoint, while still being able to advise from a global perspective.

The students who have problems along the way to graduation are the students Johnson sees the most, but she considers this one of the benefits of her position.

“One of the real joys is when you are able to help a student work through a situation and see them become successful,” Johnson said.

No matter the circumstance, Johnson is willing to assist a student as long as they are honest with her.

“I handle a lot of negative information, and I see students that have put themselves in that position, but everybody makes mistakes,” she said.

Johnson feels that her job is to assist students in solving their problems. She never solves them for them. Instead, Johnson puts students in the right position to solve their problems themselves.

“If you’ve messed up, just tell me that, and we’ll find a way to fix it if it’s at all possible,” Johnson said.

While Johnson is straight forward and honest in her position, she is always positive and uplifting and will do anything in her power to help solve a problem.

“She will turn the earth upside down the help you,” Dr. Hopper said. “The best way to summarize it-she walks on water, at least in my mind.”

He said he has never approached Johnson with a problem and been turned away. Dr. Hopper defines Johnson as a can-do person.

“She may not be able to fix every problem, but she is going to do everything she can to try and find a way,” Dr. Hopper said.

Johnson seeks the positive in things instead of the negative. She has always been a can-do,

positive person, but the CASNR students make it easy for her to uphold those traits.

Students of CASNR are always respectful, funny and polite, things Johnson attributes to their raising.

“The best way to summarize it-she walks on water.”

“The backgrounds ag students have and the way they approach you, make it easy to be on their side,” Johnson said. “They are appreciative of what you do for them, and they are receptive to what you have to say.”

Johnson’s personal philosophy is that it’s much easier for people to accept negative information if they can understand why. This philosophy is something that she holds true while interacting with the students of CASNR. She is honest, does not withhold anything, and gives them as much information as she can.

“There are times when I cannot help,” Johnson said, “but I try to give the student the reason why I cannot help. I don’t just say I cannot do it. I try to explain why.”

Johnson enjoys assisting students in solving their problems, but the best part of her job is graduation day. Watching students actually go through the graduation ceremony and receive their diplomas is a humbling experience. Johnson enjoys watching those students who did not have any problems along the way graduate, but she really feels connected to those who she helped face problems throughout the years. She remembers those who she helped navigate to the end.

“Some really stumbled and had some academic difficulty, but came back to persevere and graduate,” she said. “Those are the ones I remember.”

