

Small Beginnings, BIG VISIONS



If one wanted advice on multitasking and taking on many different jobs and projects at once, Lyda G. Garcia would be the person to ask. She has a humble background and worked extremely hard to get to where she is today. She takes pride in helping students who are underprivileged, and even though she is extremely busy, she always finds the time and energy to do what she does best - recruiting and lending help to her students.

Garcia began her journey of life in the small, rural, South Texas town of Hebbronville. Growing up, she found her passion for teaching and agriculture.

"I was very blessed growing up," Garcia said. "My father's education went up to third grade, but he was a man who learned about life. He had a lot of common sense and was a very hard worker."

Garcia said her parents were the biggest influence on her. Her father taught her about agriculture and, her mother focused on the educational side of things.

"My mother had a master's and was all about education. She was a kindergarten teacher for 15 years and a first-grade teacher for 11 or 12," Garcia said. "With my father, I learned about the ag side. We used to team rope together and I ran barrels for fun. I quickly learned that I loved teaching and agriculture."

Garcia said she realized she had a knack for teaching at a very young age. When she was in eighth-

grade she would assist her mother in teaching English to migrant workers.

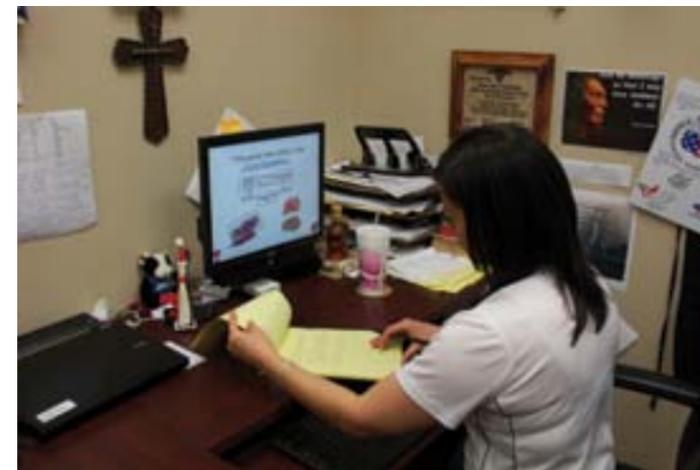
"My mother actually had me help her teach GED and amnesty," Garcia said, "which was for the migrant workers who wanted to become U.S. citizens."

Garcia said agriculture came easy for her because of her rural upbringing in a small town and the influence of her father.

"In this town you're either a rancher, a business person, or a teacher," Garcia said, "so my father was the rancher and my mother was the teacher, and I decided to combine the two for my career."

Garcia said her college career began at Clarendon College, where she found her interest in meat judging. Next, she attended Texas Tech University where she earned her bachelor's degree in animal science and was on the meat judging team. Her academic ventures took her to West Texas A&M University, where she earned her master's in both animal science and meat science. She also coached the meat judging team, taught several classes, and worked for the university's beef carcass research center. Finally, she attended Texas A&M University where she earned her doctorate in meat science. She also served as a meat science teaching and research assistant.

Once she finished her doctorate, she focused on the minority recruitment aspect of her career.



Dr. Garcia going over her daily lesson plans in her office.



Dr. Garcia explaining safe and sanitary meat practices to a group of meat plant workers in Mexico.

"I didn't go to college for 11 years to be a recruiter," Garcia said, "but as I tell all the students I interact with, 'you find something you're good at and perfect it.' Well I found out that I'm good at recruiting."

As of January 1, 2013, Garcia was officially named an academic assistant professor, helping recruit minority students into the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR).

"I would say about a third of my responsibilities are to help CASNR increase diversity," Garcia said.

She did not know where to begin when she first started recruiting. She did a

little research and found most Texas Tech recruiters target the bigger, richer 4A and 5A schools. She wanted to find the niche market, the students from similar agricultural-based, small towns like hers.

"These are the students that come from limited resources," Garcia said, "but in my opinion, they make the most of it."

She focuses on recruiting minorities from 3A, 2A and 1A schools, which usually have students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and lower-to-middle class income levels.

"I focused on three areas: South Texas, the El Paso area, and of course, around the Lubbock area," Garcia said. "So in the short time I've been doing this, I like to say I've made a small dent, especially in South Texas."

Blaine Corliss, a graduate student in the animal science department said Garcia does not just recruit and work with racial minorities. She considers students from small towns minorities too, because they are not presented with the same opportunities as students from larger towns.

"I figured out that my mission in life is to serve others, and when I can help someone in any way, that's the biggest reward."

"If you're from a small town, you're still a minority," Corliss said. "She came to my hometown, and I came from a little two-horse town without a stoplight. She came, talked to the kids, and got a lot of them inspired. There are three kids from Estancia who are going to apply to Texas Tech this year just because of that."

Department Chair for Animal and Food Sciences Leslie D. Thompson said that Garcia's new position is structured in a way where she will work about 40

percent of the time for CASNR, focusing on minority recruitment. Sixty percent of her work will be in the department, where she will teach and engage

in international research.

"She's very hard working and enthusiastic," Thompson said. "She bleeds red and black."

Garcia said she often travels to Mexico and Central America with the food safety team to do research and help foreign countries make their meat supply safer.

Once she gets home to Lubbock, Texas, it is back to the recruiting efforts for Garcia. She said her short-term goal is to recruit minorities, educate them, and see them get jobs they normally would not have the opportunity to get.

Garcia said her long-term goal would be to oversee minority recruitment and diversity as a whole.

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