

# Best Of Both WORLDS



She had been through a roller coaster of events that has included overcoming language barriers, landing a job in a male dominated field, and adjusting to cultural differences. It wasn't an easy task to adjust to life in the United States when her first language was not English, but Russian. One thing was certain, you never know where life is going to lead you, and sometimes you have to overcome obstacles to get to where you need to be.

From the industrial, coal-mining city of Donetsk, Ukraine, Dr. Olga Murova moved to the U.S. in 1987 at the age of 25 to pursue the American dream while her now ex-husband began studying at the University of Mississippi. She already had an undergraduate degree in civil engineering from Ukraine and dreamed of going back to school in the U.S., but the language barrier was an issue. Murova said she spoke no English before coming here, so she had to learn it quickly.

"If you are in the environment and there is no way to communicate, you knew you had to learn the language," Murova said. "I could only speak Russian to my husband and child at that time."

Murova took English classes at the local church and once a week at the university. She thought about going back to school for a master's degree in engineering, but an opportunity from the agriculture and applied economics department at Mississippi State University that changed her career path and led her to where she is today.

"Somebody from agricultural and applied economics contacted me and said that they are having visitors from the former Soviet Union coming to study agriculture of the U.S." Murova said. "So he asked me if I could travel with them and be an interpreter."

Murova said she was hesitant to take him up on the offer because she was still not confident in her English. However, the MSU professor was convinced that Murova's English was good enough. She went with the groups and in turn, ended up learning about Mississippi's agriculture and economics.

"When I was helping them, I got to know the professors," Murova said. "They were very nice people... and they were very encouraging and told me that if I want to go on and continue my education I can."

Murova decided to go for it and received her master's degree in agricultural and applied economics, and in 2000 got her Ph.D. from MSU. She said she has an appreciation for agriculture because of how important it is to our lifestyles and how difficult it is to be a farmer.

Murova came to Texas Tech University in 2004 because her current husband received a job in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. She wanted to work in the Department of Agriculture and Applied Economics, but there were no faculty positions available at the time. She was offered a job as an instructor and three years later became an assistant professor in the Agriculture and Applied Economics department.

Dr. Eduardo

Segarra, the head of the Agriculture and Applied Economics department, said Murova

adds something unique to the staff.

"In the history of the department, we have had two female faculty members," Segarra said. "Olga is our second and she does a great job."

Murova said although she enjoys her male colleagues, she would like to have more female presence in the department.

"Historically leadership in agriculture belonged to men, it was a male profession" Murova said. "Today we see many changes in this field with women becoming more active participants. Hopefully we will see more changes in this direction."

Beyond being the only female faculty member currently in the department, Segarra said Murova brings even more diversity to the table.

"Today we must prepare our students for them to be able to be aware of the global nature of today's economy and society," Segarra said. "The more we expose our students to foreign faculty, the better prepared they will be."

Murova's research program is focused on rural development and international development. She said her cultural background inspires her research.

"Since I'm from Ukraine, my country went through this transformation from a socialistic economy into the free market economy," Murova said. "Since I'm familiar with that process I like to keep up with what is going on in the Ukraine or other countries that were formerly socialist."

One of her current studies is examining the land policies in Ukraine. She also focuses on rural development and how additional wealth can be created in rural areas, such as wine tourism.

Murova said she likes living in Texas and working at the university.

"I really like the people here because I think they are more open-minded, friendly, and very helpful. We have

a really great environment here at the department," Murova said, "and I have really great colleagues."

Segarra said that she is a great contribution to Texas Tech.

"We are lucky that Olga is here," Segarra said. "Olga really appreciates Tech and does whatever she can for her students."

Murova said she has found a home in Lubbock and Texas Tech.

"When I first got to rural Mississippi, it was too small for me. Now, Lubbock is just perfect," Murova said. 

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