

HARD WORK PAYS OFF



Faculty, staff and students swell with pride as University of Arkansas researchers ranked Texas Tech's agricultural communications program number one in the nation in February of 2015.

In a report, titled Characteristics of U.S. Agricultural Communications Undergraduate Programs, presented at the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists meeting earlier this year, researchers Jefferson D. Miller, Morgan M. Large, K. Jill Rucker, Kate Shoulders, and Emily B. Buck announced the results of their research. The accompanying research paper states the following objectives:

- To create an updated account of existing national agricultural communications academic programs
- To describe demographic characteristics of national agricultural communications programs and describe potential trends in the discipline
- To identify the best agricultural communications academic programs as valued by agricultural communications faculty from programs across the country

Forty agricultural communications programs across the country were examined in a number of categories and ranked by Miller, Large, Rucker, Shoulders and Buck. Tech's program was ranked first, in front of the University of Florida, Oklahoma State University, Texas A&M University, and Kansas State University, respectively.

The faculty and staff in Tech's agricultural communications department work hard to keep our program the best. Assistant professor Erica Irlbeck, EdD, said the agricultural communications faculty and staff work hard to teach students things that employers and professionals say they are looking for in graduates, such as content marketing, project planning, and event planning.

"Paying attention to industry trends is something everyone has been really good about," Irlbeck said.

Agricultural Education and Communications Department Chair Steven Frazee, PhD, is proud of the recognition, too.

"The fact that our students have gone out and done very well has also been a very positive aspect," said Frazee.

Similarly to Frazee, instructor Courtney Gibson, PhD., agrees that the products of the program, or graduates, help to put Tech's program at the top of the list.

"I think part of our distinction of being number one is that we put out amazing graduates who go out into those jobs and can hit the ground running day one and don't need a lot of supervision or training from their bosses," Gibson said. "We've prepared them well to go be advocates for the industry and I think that's really what sets us apart."

"I think one of the big things that sets us apart has been research and the type of research we've done," said Frazee, who has been serving Tech's agricultural education and communications program for 27 years.

Students say that the department's faculty and staff make it outstanding.