



A Real Life Saver



Transferring from Blinn College in Bryan, Texas to Texas Tech University had been a big leap. There was the 8 and a half hour drive, being away from her family and now the stress of grades. Lizza Delgado had been an animal science major since starting college and the fit had never been a good one for her. She was starting to feel more overwhelmed than she could handle. It was as though she was drowning in a sea of her own choices.

Then, someone threw her a life preserver; a way out of her trouble.

Liz found herself in the office of Ramona Johnson, coordinator of undergraduate programs. With Ramona's help, Liz's major was changed from animal science to agricultural leadership, a much better fit. By throwing out that life preserver, Ramona turned things around for Liz and now she will be graduating next fall.

"Without her help, I would have been totally lost and miserable with what I was doing," Delgado said. "Now, I love my classes and can't wait to start my future career."

Johnson, a graduate of Texas Tech in social welfare, has been serving others long before beginning her work the Dean's office in the College of Agricultural Science and Natural Resources as the coordinator of undergraduate programs.

Johnson spent four years working for the American Red Cross before she and her family moved to Houston and was there for 10 years before coming back to Lubbock. In 1991, Johnson had the opportunity to come back to work at Texas Tech as the coordinator of undergraduate programs and has been here ever since.

"There's satisfaction in seeing the kids succeed having worked with them from the very beginning."

Johnson's job as coordinator of undergraduate programs requires her to wear several hats. She handles everything from advising students, to making sure that graduation requirements are met, to placing students on academic probation and to awarding Dean's list certificates.

Cindy Akers, Associate Dean for Academic and Student Programs in CASNR, said that Ramona handles everything to do with undergraduate students.

"She has touched the lives of every single student that has ever been enrolled in CASNR in the 23 years that she has been working here."

Johnson said her favorite part about her job is the interaction with students and faculty.

"We're unique in the college in the fact that we do have faculty advisors and I get a chance to interact with them and I enjoy that," Johnson said. "We have the best faculty and the best students, so I am fortunate in that regard."

According to Akers, Johnson is often referred to as "Dean Ramona" by others at Texas Tech because of her extensive knowledge of anything to do with undergraduate programs.

"More faculty members across campus call CASNR for advising advice because Ramona is just a wealth of knowledge," Akers said.

A big part of Johnson's job is putting students on academic probation. Johnson said she spends much more time with students who are in academic difficulty rather than those whose grades are good.

Johnson said that it is very rewarding to see someone who was perhaps struggling initially, come back and graduate. In some instances, people have to leave school due to outside circumstances come back in two or three years and get their degree despite the odds.

Though there are many happy endings, there are just as many that don't end quite as well.

Akers said that along with Johnson's other responsibilities, she also has to give a lot of bad news in regard to probation and expulsion. Johnson manages to take such a tough job and do it with kindness, respect, and care. Johnson listens to each student with compassion. Akers said that's a rare quality to find in someone who works in Johnson's position.

Johnson also said that a fair amount of her job is dealing with graduation matters. She works with students all the way from getting signed up for classes during their orientation to approving them for graduation.

"There's satisfaction in seeing the kids succeed," Johnson said, "having worked with them from the very beginning."




Come May, however, Johnson will be taking her next step and retiring from Texas Tech. With her husband's retirement two years ago and the arrival of a new granddaughter in Houston, Johnson said it was just time.

Johnson said that her position is a 365 day a year job. Texas Tech has three graduations a year and orientations in the summer, so making it time for travel and seeing her family has been tough.

Even though she is moving on to a new chapter in her life, Johnson says she will miss her Texas Tech students the most.

"Seeing the success of the students was probably the most rewarding part for me," Johnson said.

Even though Johnson is moving on to the next chapter of her life and leaving behind her position as "Dean Ramona" the CASNR "life saver", the shadow she cast in her time here is a long one.

"She has been such a blessing," Akers said. "It's such a tough job to have to be as firm as she is, but at the same time she has always been fair, consistent and kind. She will definitely be missed." 

Cassie Kendrick
SANTA ANNA, TEXAS



TEXAS TECH
UNIVERSITY.


College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources


Student to Teacher Ratio



 **1856** Total CASNR enrollment
(2012)

 **29** Average class size

 **25-30%** Students going directly to graduate or professional school after undergraduate completion

 **75%** Admittance of CASNR students who apply to vet, medical, law, or pharmacy school

Notable CASNR Alums

Daniel Backeen founder of TCBY (The Country's Best Yogurt)

Robert Duncan Texas senator

Wyman Meinzer Texas state photographer

Drew Deberry USDA liaison to the White House

Bryan Daniel USDA State Director for Rural Development- Texas

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