

From the Hub to the Hill *and back again...*

Many students and alumni from the College of Agriculture Sciences & Natural Resources at Texas Tech University can relate to the dream of one day walking across the graduation stage and making their mark on the world.

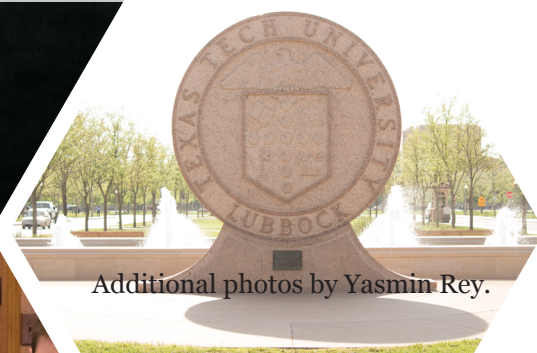
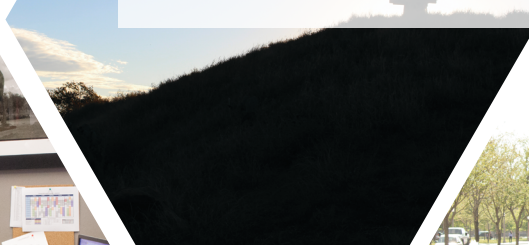
One alumnus has made significant strides for his professional career in just a matter of a few short years.

The first generation college student from Woodson, Texas, had no idea his decision to pursue a degree in agricultural economics at Texas Tech would later pave the way to his current role as chief of staff to the chancellor of the Texas Tech University System.

"They took a kid from a small town of just a couple of hundred people to the big city," said Brandon Lipps, chief of staff for the chancellor. "They pushed me out of my comfort zone both professionally and personally."

Lipps works with Chancellor Robert L. Duncan daily to serve the over 35,000 students at Texas Tech's Lubbock campus as well as those at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, Angelo State University and Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in El Paso. As the chief of staff, he serves on the chancellor's executive cabinet and works closely with the chancellor in developing policy, identifying strategic priorities and plays a major role in executing the chancellor's goals for the system.

Although Lipps is passionate about his position now, he had not always envisioned this job in his future while an undergraduate student at Texas Tech. However, because of his experiences as an intern and policy-maker in Washington, D.C., he quickly worked his way up the professional ladder.



Additional photos by Yasmin Rey.

During his undergraduate program, Lipps soon realized college was more than earning a degree. He found a place in the CASNR family and attributes his current success to the start he had at Texas Tech.

"CASNR not only gave me what I needed academically," Lipps said, "but they pushed my limits in a number of areas and provided the opportunities I needed to build the contacts and network to get to the places I went."

As a young college student, Lipps said he did not necessarily have the aspiration to work in policy and much less a desire to participate in the college's congressional internship program. After some coaxing from faculty in the department, Lipps decided to apply for the opportunity and said his time as a congressional intern sparked his passion for public service.

His new appreciation for policy led to other opportunities to become involved in the political arena. Because of his eagerness to learn, he landed his first job with Chancellor Duncan in Lubbock when Duncan was a state senator.

During that time, Lipps was involved in the Texas Tech Fellows Program that provided students the opportunity to intern under Sen. Duncan in his Lubbock office and travel to Austin during political sessions.

The impression Lipps made during his time working for Senator Duncan opened many doors for him, perhaps the biggest one being the door to his current position.

"I always saw early on, even as an intern, that Brandon had a maturity level that was above what you would expect somebody of his age or education," Duncan said, "and so that was always an impressive thing to me."

Duncan said it was these traits that set Lipps on the path to a full-time position with him after completing his undergraduate degree.

After some experience working with agricultural policy in Austin, Brandon decided to further expand upon his professional skillset by attending law school at Texas Tech.

While working toward a law degree, Lipps had the unique opportunity to give back to the congressional internship program that provided him his start. He assisted Ronald Phillips, Texas Tech University Counsel and CASNR alumnus.

Lipps said he was passionate about helping students gain work experience with an internship that made such an impact on his life and continues to be an advocate for the program today. He said he believes all students can benefit from the program regardless of their initial interest in politics.

"Some people decide they love politics and some people decide they hate it," Lipps said, "but they all learn a lot about careers, life and the political process. I think it's a positive change regardless of your feeling of wanting to work in politics or not when you finish."

It was because of Lipps' desire and passion for public service that Phillips said he immediately saw something different in Lipps, even as a young law student.

"He has character and integrity, and I think people respect that," Phillips said.

After law school, Duncan and Lipps' paths crossed again as Lipps practiced law in the same firm Duncan was a partner. Lipps practiced law for two years before embarking on a new venture back to Washington, D.C., working for the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture.

"I enjoyed my two years practicing law," Lipps said, "but I had the opportunity to go up to D.C.; that's something that I have always wanted to do."

During his four years in D.C., Lipps worked on a number of projects, mainly the Agriculture Act of 2014 where he worked primarily on legislation for the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program.

Although those years in Washington were

irreplaceable for Lipps, he was excited to reunite with Duncan once more and made a move back to West Texas when Duncan was named chancellor of the Texas Tech University System. Duncan offered Lipps the position as his chief of staff, which to Lipps was a once in a lifetime offer.

"I knew he would be good in this role because I had seen him develop from an intern to a staffer to an attorney," Duncan said. "Observing the responsibilities he had on the farm bill in congress, it seemed to me to be the perfect match for what I was looking for."

Those around Lipps were not surprised when he was selected to this prestigious position. Phillips said he knew Lipps would thrive as the chancellor's chief of staff because of his professionalism, work ethic and passion for the school.

"He is a good fit for Texas Tech because he knows and loves the school," Phillips said. "He wants what is best for it without being blind to the real world, and he will be effective in advancing Texas Tech."

Since Lipps has moved back to Lubbock, he said he could not be happier with his career change. He is passionate about his work and enjoys giving back to a university that provided him so much as a student.

"It is an exciting time to be at Texas Tech," Lipps said. "The university system as a whole has only grown and become more prestigious over recent years."

Lipps said he predicts the trend will continue.

"Even since I was in college, the entire Texas Tech University System has grown in both size and stature," he said, "the opportunity to be a part of taking that to the next level is truly exciting." **T**



Kayla M. Wilkins

Poteet, Texas

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to be at Texas Tech."*