

# Cowgirl in a suit

*Indiana cowgirl loves to wear jeans but makes a difference in a suit*

From the corn fields of northwest Indiana came this dairy farmer's daughter. Most comfortable in boots and jeans, this small-town girl relates well to people because she cares about others.

The newest member of the Oklahoma State University College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources administration, Cheryl DeVuyst serves CASNR students, faculty and staff as the new assistant dean.

Born and raised in Kouts, Ind., DeVuyst is no stranger to hard work and said she does not mind getting her hands dirty. Growing up, DeVuyst baled hay, cleaned pens and fed livestock.

"I am just a small-town girl," DeVuyst said. "In school, I was a member of 4-H and FFA."

While in those organizations, DeVuyst took a special interest in hogs and showed many of them. In fact, when asked what made her different, she said, "I am probably the only administrator here who has been on the cover of *Hogs Today*."

While deciding what to study in college, DeVuyst told her high school guidance counselor she was interested in pursuing an agriculture degree. Her counselor told her she was too smart to study agriculture. DeVuyst said she was highly offended.

"Farmers and ranchers prove every day it takes intelligence to thrive in global agriculture," DeVuyst said.

DeVuyst earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in agricultural economics with an emphasis in finance from Purdue University and her doctoral degree in agricultural economics with an emphasis in marketing and finance from the University of Illinois.

While in college, DeVuyst was one of few girls who studied agricultural economics. She said she worked hard to separate herself from stereotypes.

"Many people thought the girls were just studying agricultural economics to find a husband," DeVuyst said. "I wasn't trying to find a husband. I was just interested in studying agricultural economics."

While it may not have been the fueling force behind her drive to study agricultural economics, DeVuyst did find a husband who shared the same academic interests: Eric DeVuyst also studied agricultural economics.

DeVuyst and her husband recently left North Dakota

State University, where they were both faculty members in the agricultural economics department. He has joined the OSU agricultural economics faculty as a professor.

The DeVuysts reside in Morrison, Okla., with their 13-year-old daughter, Megan. The DeVuysts said they chose to move to Morrison because they wanted to live in a small community with a good school and a strong agricultural program.

DeVuyst said she feels "divinely smiled upon" for having the opportunity to be a CASNR administrator.

"When we started the process of filling the position for the assistant dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, we wanted to find someone who would make a connection with our students," said Robert Whitson, Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources vice president, dean and director. "Dr. DeVuyst holds excellent academic credentials and is clearly interested in the well-being of CASNR students."

Ed Miller, CASNR associate dean, said he was thrilled with the decision to select DeVuyst as the assistant dean.

"She is a strong educator, she matches our philosophy, and she has a sincere desire to develop students and faculty," Miller said.

Miller said he knows CASNR students are happy to have DeVuyst.

"On Sunday before classes began, Dr. DeVuyst was doing some training with the Student Academic Mentors, and I was in my office with the door open catching up on some paperwork," Miller said. "I overheard some students from around the corner, who did not know I was listening, talking about how much they like Dr. DeVuyst and how they are looking forward to working with her. What more could we ask for?"

Other students on campus said they enjoy working with DeVuyst.

"Dr. DeVuyst is always nice and very easy to speak with," said agribusiness senior Carol Cook. "I feel like I could ask her anything."

DeVuyst instructs AG 1011, which is the orientation class for CASNR freshmen, and oversees the CASNR scholarship program. DeVuyst also helps advisers from all CASNR clubs and organizations and is responsible for faculty and student development.

While CASNR and its departments awarded more than \$1 million to graduate and undergraduate students last year, DeVuyst is working to increase the amount of scholarship money available. She said she hopes to lessen the financial burden tuition can bring. DeVuyst also said she wants to see more recognition for faculty.

“My ultimate goal here at OSU is to develop people,” DeVuyst said. “I want to help develop students, not just in academics, but as the leaders they will become. I also want to develop new and current faculty members into award-winning faculty members, to help earn them the recognition they deserve.”

This small-town girl may be a long way from Indiana, but she still stays close to her roots. DeVuyst dons a suit daily, but she said she is still most comfortable in boots and jeans. Her love of agriculture makes her approachable, and her drive to develop others is making a difference for CASNR. • *By Johnna Stevenson, Fletcher, Okla.*

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*Cheryl DeVuyst has been a cowgirl all her life, but she officially became one during summer 2008, after being hired as the new assistant dean for the OSU College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.*



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