

Dr. Joe and Dr. Chris help to cultivate agricultural minds

By Jan Higginbotham
THE BATTALION

He stands 6 feet 4 inches. She's 5 feet 2 inches. They might not look like the most likely couple in the world, but don't tell them that.

Drs. Joe and Christine Townsend (known to their students as Dr. Joe and Dr. Chris) married Dec. 18, 1980, and have been touching the lives of Texas A&M students since they began teaching here in 1984.



Stew Milne, THE BATTALION

Drs. Joe and Christine Townsend sit with her favorite statue near the Scoates building.

Dr. Joe is associate dean for student development in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; Dr. Chris is a professor and adviser in the Department of Agricultural Development.

Ryan Busse, a junior agricultural development major, said the Townsends have made a major difference in his life.

"There aren't words to describe the relationship I've had with Dr. Joe and Dr. Chris and the difference they've made in my life," Busse said. "They're extremely caring people. Every student at A&M is like their child because they care for us every day. They're truly amazing."

Dr. Joe, Class of '67, works primarily with men, especially through his AGLS 101 class, which introduces students to the College of Agriculture. "My heavy emphasis is on the freshman, especially the first semester," Dr. Joe said. "It is to get 'em here, keep 'em here and get 'em ready for the future."

Dr. Joe's class teaches freshmen how to succeed at A&M, explains opportunities available at A&M and offers career counseling.

Christine Sanders, a senior agricultural business major, said Dr. Joe's class helped her decide on a major.

"He always said, 'Make sure you enjoy what you're doing and that it makes you happy,'" Sanders said. "He really did change the course of my life."

Dr. Joe has an open-door policy for students who need someone to talk to.

Will Looney, a senior agricultural business major, said Dr. Joe always makes time to help with his problems.

"He's almost like the perfect best friend," Looney said. "He makes you feel like he cares about anything for you. He tries so hard to help you be the best they can be."

Dr. Chris, who earned undergraduate and master's degrees from Ohio State University and a doctorate from Iowa State University, coordinates the agricultural development degree program, carrying the main load of student advising.

She also teaches AGED 340, a class in professional leadership skills. The demand for AGED 340 is high at A&M, with only 120 slots for students each fall and spring and 25 in the summer.

"I believe we need to make education available to each student," Dr. Chris said. "I pretend like I'm a student and ask, 'Why would I want to do this?' I try to show students what is in it for them."

Busse said Dr. Chris' class has already helped him to be a better leader.

"I know that I'll walk away from that class having learned a lot about leadership and about vision for myself," he said. "She doesn't just want you to be educated — she wants you to learn."

Angie Hohensee, a junior agricultural development major, said Dr. Chris is always willing to help out of her way to help.

"She'll put her other appointments aside to help out or answer questions," Hohensee said. "She will figure out options for you if you're having a problem."

Dr. Joe and Dr. Chris met at Iowa State University where they both received their doctorates in agricultural education.

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