Meet the Dean: Shane Burgess

University Relations - Communications
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They're experts in their fields and essential campus leaders, but how well do you know deans across the University?

This regular Lo Que Pasa series introduces deans across campus and provides insight into their motivations, challenges and reasons for choosing to work at the UA.

This week, meet a dean who is a native New Zealander and has traveled the world as a practicing veterinarian and scientist.

Dean: Shane Burgess
College: College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Number of years as dean: 4
Fun Fact: I originally wanted to get a job working as a marine biologist for Jacques Cousteau, and I actually worked for New Zealand's Oceanographic Research Institute doing statistical analysis on various weird marine organisms that no one’s heard of during my last year of high school. I grew up on, in and under the water – so I’m very connected to it. I was never more than 10 minutes away from the water, but then I realized at the end of high school that Jacques Cousteau had stopped hiring and I should probably go off and do something else.

What do you enjoy most about serving as dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences?
The wonderful people I get to interact with every day of the week.

When and why did you choose to join the UA?
When is after I visited the University of Arizona before I applied for the job – that's when I thought this would be a good idea. I feel really at home in Arizona. This is a wonderful campus, and everyone I met had a positive, go-getting, entrepreneurial spirit. I wanted to become part of a community like this.

What are some of the challenges and rewards of serving as dean?
The main challenge is we’re trying to deliver a phenomenal service in education, teaching and Cooperative Extension in a very challenging financial environment. This puts a lot of pressure on our really good people who are trying to do all the work. (The rewarding part is) being able to see the amazing things that our faculty, staff and students do all the time – despite the challenges they face.

What’s one thing happening in your college right now that people should know about?
That we’ve invested in developing strong leaders who are committed to serving the people of Arizona, not only in developing leaders in our administrative heads, staff and faculty, but also bringing leadership skills to the CALS student body so they’ll have a real advantage when it comes to the workplace.

What does the future hold for your college?
We’ll continue to be central to Arizona’s economic wellbeing, both through the kinds of people we graduate from our very diverse programs and also because of our diverse direct impacts on the economy via our research and especially Cooperative Extension.

What is your leadership philosophy?
Responsibility, integrity, transparency and accountability.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?
I’m sorry, I don’t understand the question.