



# Paving Your Path

*Youth prepare for the next step in their education.*

*by Megan Silveira, editorial intern*

More than 20 million students attended a college or university in the United States during the fall of 2017, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

As a high school graduate, it is easy for one to become overwhelmed by the sheer number of students traversing the path to the college. However, this can be a time of personal growth and approached with excitement.

## Silencing doubt

With all the changes accompanying the start of life as a college student, Dylan Denny from Lubbock, Texas, understands how easy it is to become overrun with worry. Denny is now a Cowboy, he started his freshman year at Oklahoma State University (OSU) this last August.

Denny says he has concerns about making the transition from high school to college.

He heard rumors of large classes and intense courses, but he is allowing his enthusiasm to push these worries to the side.

Lexi Stevenson from Argyle, Texas, joined Denny at OSU as a freshman this fall. Stevenson admits leaving her family was intimidating. She knows college will be tougher than high school and is scared of disappointing others.

“I do not want to let myself stand in the way of doing well at college,” Stevenson says.

With plans of finding support in peers and professors, Stevenson worked to let her eagerness for Stillwater outweigh her concerns.

“It’s an exciting time,” Denny says. “Worry and stress shouldn’t take over. You need to let yourself fly by the seat of your pants and enjoy it.”

## Choosing a campus

It is never too early to begin planning for the future, according to Elizabeth Vietheer, a senior at Elk Grove High School in California. Vietheer has one year left before she has to make a decision, but she has already started forming a plan for her college path.

Vietheer says she is drawn to schools in Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas, but plans on livestock judging at a junior college before transferring to a four-year university. She attributes her background in the cattle industry for her desire to get involved with livestock judging.

She grew up on the HAVE Angus operation, in Wilton, Calif., where she



learned everything about the cattle industry from her father, Jim Vietheer. “Big Jim” is a man well known in the cattle industry, both for his involvement in HAVE Angus and his time in the show ring as a judge. Vietheer says she has always admired her father’s success in Angus and the cattle industry.

“I want to be just like my dad,” Vietheer says. “I’ve got some big shoes to fill.”

While Vietheer is still trying to find the campus where she feels most at home, she says she knows it is okay to be uncertain. She considers this to be one of the biggest decisions she will ever have to make and believes everyone should take the time they need when selecting a college.

Stevenson understands Vietheer’s struggles with narrowing down the best fit for college. Despite knowing OSU was a “hub for Angus kids,” Stevenson was not always planning on being a Cowboy.

“Some things didn’t go as planned when I was looking into colleges,” Stevenson says. “And then God just opened this door for me at OSU.”

She trusted herself and her faith when selecting a campus and encourages others to do the same.

“Go wherever you feel is best for you,” Stevenson advises. “It’s your time to figure out who you want to be and you need to go where you’ll be able to achieve that.”

Denny did just as Stevenson advises and knew from the beginning OSU was for him. He says he found comfort in the months before school started by having a plan about his future. Denny, like Stevenson, credits the friends he has made in the Angus

industry for leading him to Stillwater.

“OSU has been a hot spot for Angus kids,” Denny says. “It offers some great connections in the breed and an amazing college atmosphere.”

## Major decisions

Once a college has been selected, students need to choose their major and it seems the Angus industry has been providing a helping hand to junior members making this decision for quite some time.

Regarding his future, Denny says he “always knew it would be agriculture.” He let his personality and background in the cattle industry help him narrow down the plethora of majors and options OSU has to offer, a method he believes to be extremely effective. He is majoring

on entering the nursing field after finishing school, Stevenson will be majoring in animal science at OSU. She says this decision provides her with an advantage against other nursing students in the long run, but she also knew she would never be able to give up agriculture.

“I don’t want to fully leave the agricultural industry,” Stevenson says regarding her unique decision. Her choice of major is proof you can achieve your goals while still studying what you love, no matter what campus or major you land in.

## Time for the transition

Intimidated by the thought of leaving California and her parents, Vietheer is eager to have an opportunity to grow on her own.

“I’m going to be creating myself,” Vietheer says. “I’ll just be Elizabeth and people will know me for me.”

Denny is living the future Vietheer describes and says preparing to leave his hometown and family was quite the process.

“It’s kind of a shell shock to transition from high school to college,” Denny says.

Part of this preparation includes selecting a class schedule and finding a place to live. He was aware of these needs as soon as he was accepted to OSU and diligently worked with university staff to stay prepared. Denny says this kept him calm but eager about the start of school leading up to day one.

Denny attended orientation in June to plan out his class schedule for his first semester. Between this experience and regularly checking for updates on OSU’s website,



in agribusiness with a minor in animal science.

“I’m a talkative kind of guy,” Denny says. “Agribusiness intrigues me, and I know it’ll be a good fit.”

Denny suggests all incoming college freshmen learn to trust their instincts when selecting a major and find what best reflects their personalities and fits their goals.

Stevenson was able to balance the dreams she has for her future with her passion for cattle when selecting a major, something she is extremely thankful for. Though she is planning

*Continued on page 292*

Denny says he felt ready to head to Stillwater when the time came.

Having already attended orientation, Stevenson was comforted knowing her schedule for the first semester had already been secured. She, like Denny, says the best way to prepare for the start of school was to stay informed.

Denny was driven by his excitement for the start of the fall semester and claims he was most eager to experience the living arrangements he selected on campus. Denny was chosen to be part of the Freshmen in Transition (FIT) program, an affiliate of OSU's College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. This organization is dedicated to bringing together about 100 freshmen, all with agricultural majors, housed in a living-learning community together on campus.

"The opportunity to go in and meet a bunch of agriculture kids is really reassuring," Denny says. "I didn't have to worry about meeting new friends with similar interests."

The program alleviated some of Denny's previous concerns about leaving his friends in Texas and he urges students to look into similar programs their campus might offer.

Knowing where you came from amidst the rush of looking forward to getting the full college experience, Denny says his passion for Angus cattle has kept him grounded and focused. Denny considers the American Angus Association home and says he will never stop caring for the breed and those involved with it.

"I know it's what I want to do and be a part of for the rest of my life," Denny says. "This Association is so good to the people it serves. My main priority is

to stay involved in it in some way."

Vietheer is also confident her future lies in the cattle industry. While she has grown up around Angus cattle, she formed her own passion for the breed and plans to raise her own herd after finishing college. Thankful for the lessons learned from her time in the barn, Vietheer believes cattle have taught her everything she knows.

While Vietheer is still working to choose her future college, she has faith the Angus industry is giving her the skills she needs to make the best decision. Attending the Leaders Engaged in Angus Development (LEAD) Conference helped her learn more about herself and, in turn, get closer to making a decision about her impending college career.

Despite how busy her college schedule will be, Stevenson says she plans on making time to attend shows with her Angus cattle.

"I'll still be kicking it in the show ring," Stevenson says. "Even if I'm not showing, I want to support my little sister. I really cherish the moments I get to spend in the show barn."

## Key to success

Denny says the key to tackling college will be to let himself have fun

and soak up the knowledge of others around him.

"I'm on my own," Denny says, "but I have tools at my disposal to help me prepare for my new adult life."

Denny offers advice to those also preparing for college, saying the best decision he made was to let his excitement for the start of this new journey grow. His main goal was to have an open mind when he arrived in Stillwater and urges others to do the same.

Vietheer's approach to preparing for college echoes Denny's advice. She is letting herself follow her heart when it comes to making decisions. With the open mind Denny suggests, Vietheer is taking every opportunity to learn more about the college life.

With campus tours scheduled in the future and another year to perfect her talent for livestock judging, Vietheer is confident she will be able to handle college when she graduates next May.

College can be a scary time, where junior members are forced to accept that they are growing up. Attending college is the experience of a lifetime, one where amazing memories and friendships can be made, and Stevenson says students should be

looking towards the future with optimism. **AJ**

*Editor's note: Similar to how selecting a college and major is the first step towards adulthood, this is the first article in the Paving Your Path series. The series will follow the steps of youth growing into their future selves, and, hopefully, help them handle the tough decisions coming their way. Check next month's Angus Journal to learn about internships and how to succeed as college graduation sneaks closer.*

