

DR. JEANNE GLEASON. BA BS '74, MS '77
College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES)

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“Without NMSU, I don’t know if I’d be who I am today. Everyone has been so encouraging. That’s something money can’t buy.”

Program bio | 2,995 characters

When Dr. Jeanne Gleason retired in 2020 as department head for NMSU’s Innovative Media Research and Extension in the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences, she had produced 879 educational YouTube videos (118 million views); worked in 48 countries; raised \$124 million in grant funding; served 14 NMSU presidents; developed 62 educational games, apps, and interactives—and occupied six different offices in Gerald Thomas Hall.

Raised on a modest farm in Lovington, NM, Jeanne’s family worked hard and loved deeply. Her father gave her confidence in her abilities and instilled in her an indomitable work ethic. Active in 4-H, as a high school sophomore Jeanne won a contest that paid her way to the 4-H state conference in Las Cruces. Seeing the Organ Mountains for the first time, she cried because they were so beautiful, and her decision to attend NMSU was sealed.

Having worked in radio in Lovington, as a freshman Jeanne walked into the then-student-run KRWG-AM and went to work, first on-air, then selling advertisements, and finally as station manager. She was an ambitious student, earning a B.S. in home economics, a B.A. in journalism, and an M.S. in home economics. Jeanne took a job in NMSU Ag Communications and was soon acting department head. She spent her first sabbatical at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPISU, now Virginia Tech) working on one of the first touch-screen systems in the nation. On her second sabbatical working at the Smithsonian Institution, Jeanne earned her doctorate at VPISU in Educational Technology, taking night classes and finishing her dissertation upon her return to NMSU.

It was the infancy of educational media, and the NMSU Cooperative Extension Service gave Jeanne every opportunity to innovate. She took her documentary skills and her students into the field, and the state—and then the world—became her classroom for creating and teaching educational media in every emerging technological format. She and her students worked alongside extension agents and researchers on training videos first across New Mexico and then in mostly rural places across the globe, including China, Iraq, Egypt, Vietnam, Australia, and Afghanistan, as well as throughout Europe, Central America, and South America. The finished product would go to both the researchers and the communities themselves, in whatever format aligned with their technological capabilities.

Jeanne gives time and financial support generously to help students because it is “just what a good person does.” Her favorite memories from her illustrious career are of her students who started off nervous about college and unsure of their abilities, but who, given time, patience, and guidance, “blossomed” into confident young people ready to explore their dreams.

Her advice for students and young alum? “If you really want something and are not afraid of hard work, you can achieve your dream. Just don’t take ‘no’ for an answer the first time.”