

EXPOSURE



FLOCKING TOWARD INSPIRATION

Life on the farm: Natalie Gutierrez

Story by [Fresno State](#)

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At the northeast corner of Fresno State's campus, approximately 100 sheep reside. The Sheep Unit, one of 22 enterprises at the University Agricultural Laboratory (campus farm), is also home to Natalie Gutierrez.

Natalie is an agriculture education student who lives in a small apartment adjacent to the Sheep Unit. She is responsible for tending to the flock, feeding the sheep and monitoring their health.

"I'll get up at around 7 a.m. that way I can have time to go feed," Natalie says. "I have classes

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flock that have lambed, or anyone that's been sick, or looks abnormal.”

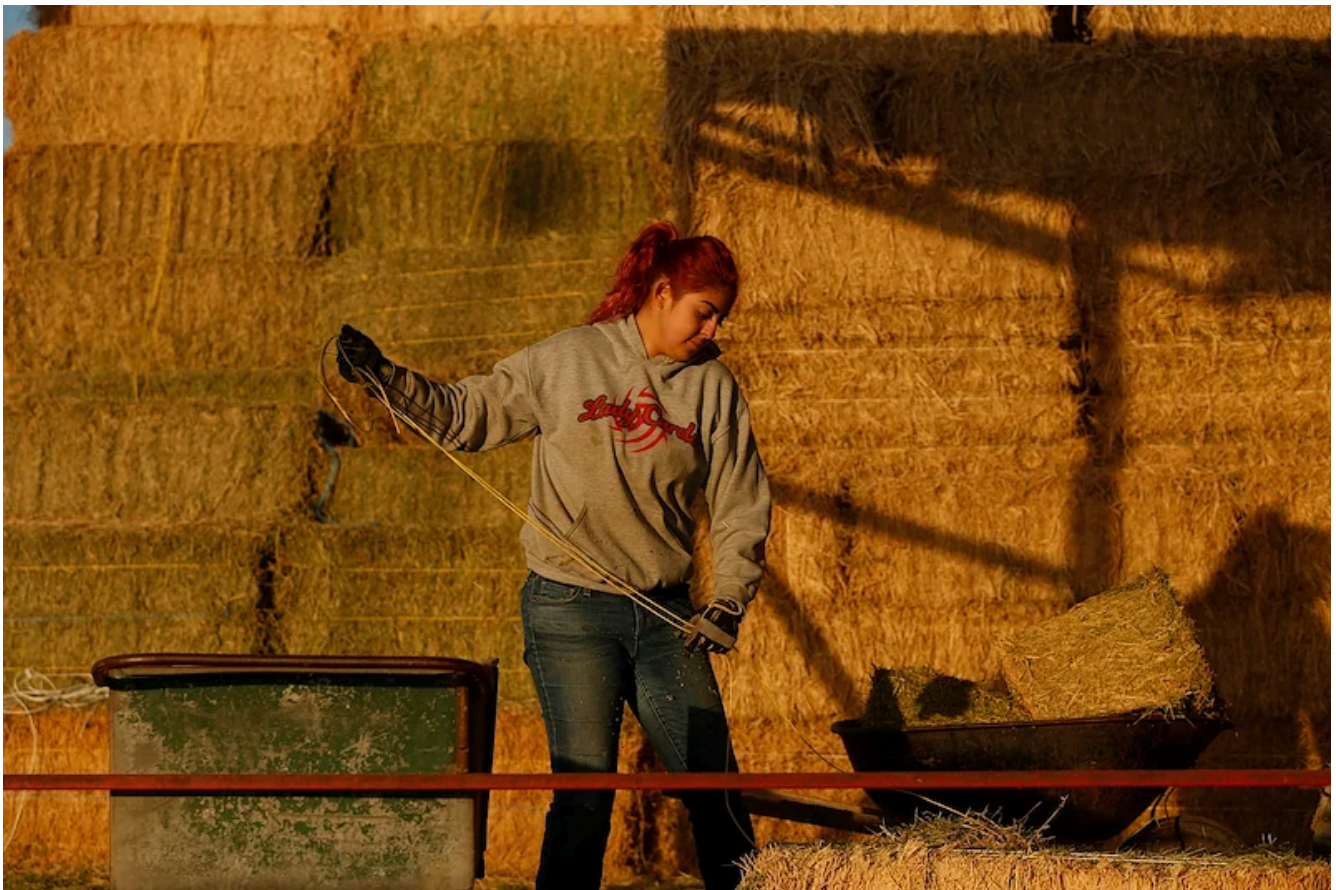
Natalie is the primary student responsible for the day-to-day care of the flock. She has the support of five students and works under lecturer and Sheep Unit enterprise manager John Cordeiro.

“The person who lives there is the student manager, involved in all aspects of production,” John says. “Her leadership skills are enhanced by living there. Everything that happens on a daily basis — she’s the first person I go to.”

One day, Natalie hopes to pass on her knowledge to the next generation of agriculture leaders as a high school teacher.



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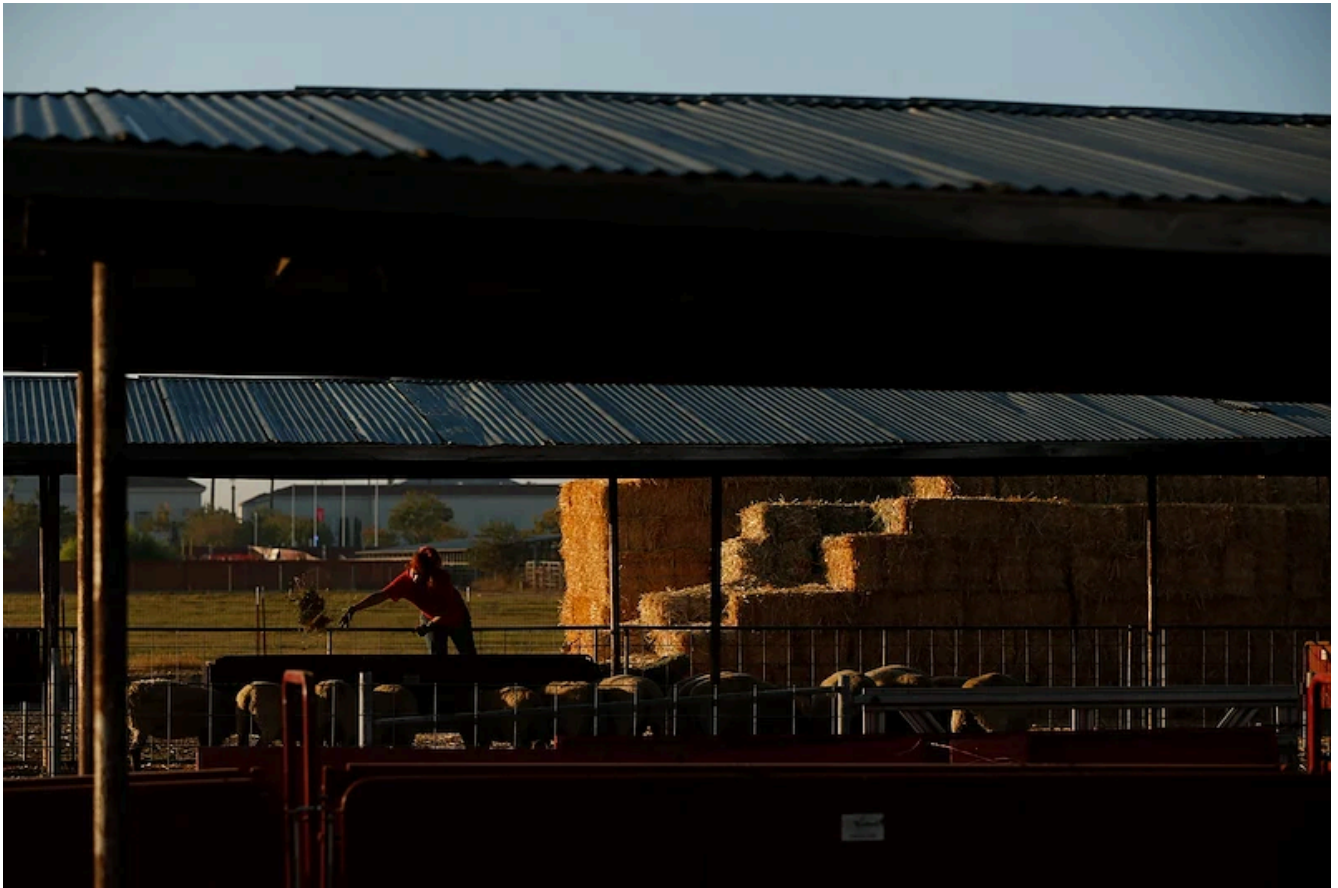
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The expertise Natalie is developing at the Sheep Unit is critical, and it's thanks to donor support. Donors have provided Fresno State with rams, veterinary health supplies and feed. With the supplies, Natalie gains experience in livestock feeding, vaccination, treatment and birthing.

"A lot of it is just getting that hands-on education," Natalie says. "If a lamb's sick and they're not eating, I bring them into my home and I'm bottle feeding them every two hours. Just trying to make sure they're alive. So it's kinda like having a child, like a human baby, but it's livestock."

Natalie vividly recalls the pressure of learning how to tube-feed a young lamb who was unable to nurse. She directed a tube through the lamb's esophagus and into their stomach, using a funnel to pour in milk slowly. The process was scary, she says, as one mistake could result in a punctured lung.

"In order to keep the lamb alive, we had to use a tube to feed them, to give them that energy and the nutrients to grow," she says. "After I did it right the first time, I got the confidence and thought, 'Okay I can do this. This isn't as scary as we all make it out to be.'"



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Natalie's passion for tending to animals grew when she studied agriculture at Lindsay High School.

Her high school teacher, Pam Brem, also attended Fresno State and worked in the University's Sheep Unit under John Cordeiro.

"She was kind of like a second mom almost," Natalie says. "I felt like being a teacher was what I should do too."

Pam recommended Natalie attend Fresno State so that she can gain day-to-day experience working with animals.

"Natalie became a natural leader. When she told me she was interested in teaching agriculture, I thought that Fresno State really has the production agriculture advantage. She could get her teaching credential and gain hands-on experience," Pam says.

Next semester, Natalie will start her teaching credential program and learn the techniques she needs to inspire the next generation of agriculture leaders in the Central Valley.

"I just want to build my future, help motivate and inspire kids, the same way my teacher did for me," Natalie says. "I just want them to get that

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experience.”



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Footnote: *Photos by Cary Edmondson, Story by Esra Hashem — University Brand Strategy and Marketing*

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