

1999 Miss Latvia now attending UWF

Andy Pennebaker
Staff Writer

Editor's note: This begins our series featuring just a few of the almost 300 international students at the University of West Florida.

How do you say "beauty pageant" in four different languages? Julija Djadenko can tell you how. She can speak in Russian, Latvian, English and Norwegian. She also happens to be a very accomplished ice skater.

The multilingual and multitalented winner of the 1999 Miss Latvia beauty pageant is a student at the University of West Florida.

Djadenko is an international relations major at the University on an exchange student program for two semesters.

She was born in Riga, the capital city of Latvia, in 1981. At the time, the small eastern European country was still a part of the Soviet Union. In 1991, the county gained independence.

Djadenko is well-traveled, having competed in many other pageants around the world. She has been the feature of many newspaper and magazine articles in her native country.

Her vocation in modeling has taken her to Turkey, Germany, Austria, Brazil, Russia, Lebanon and most recently to Greece in 2002 to participate in the Miss Tourism Planet beauty pageant.

The Miss Latvia beauty pageant is different from the beauty competitions that are held in the United

States, Djadenko said.

Men compete alongside the women. In the competition, the contestants are judged on beauty, personal achievements and dancing.

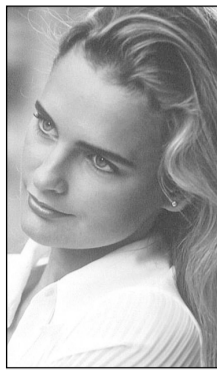
"It was very difficult," she said. "We had to practice a long time." The televised event had a choreographed dance to a Backstreet Boys' song, an evening dress event and a swimsuit exhibition. During the final phase of the pageant, five women and five men finalists were selected. Djadenko was selected as the winner of the pageant.

Winning the Miss Latvia crown was a defining moment of her life, she said.

"I really wasn't happy when I won. But then afterwards, my friends started to shake me, and then it hit me," Djadenko said. "It was the best night of my life. My life really changed after that time."

Competing in beauty contests wasn't Djadenko's first love. Ice skating was.

She started skating when she was 2 years old, later becoming the Latvian national champion for figure skating six times, and placing sixth over all in the Soviet Union. The training was very rigorous,



Djadenko



Submitted to The Voyager

Julija Djadenko, a former Miss Latvia and a figure skating champion, enjoys the beaches and warm weather in Florida.

Djadenko said. Her practices started in the morning and ran until

evening. And while she still ice skates

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for fun, Djadenko gave up competitive ice skating to pursue a career in modeling when she turned 17.

"Figure skating was not my main major, and my purpose in life was not to be a trainer or a coach," Djadenko said.

All of this traveling and competing was put aside when she came to the United States to attend UWF to pursue a major in international relations.

Djadenko said she hopes to utilize a degree and work for the European Union after she graduates.

Coming to UWF wasn't easy, she said. It took a little more than a year for her to set things up to come to the University.

The time difference between the countries is more than eight hours and obtaining a visa was no easy task.

Because of the restrictions on her visa, Djadenko's family cannot be in the United States while she is here, she said.

But that will change soon, because Latvia will become a part of the European Union in the near future.

It is Djadenko's first time in the United States.

At first, she was apprehensive about coming to Florida.

"I was very afraid before I came here. Some of my friends were working in New York and

they said the people over there are not friendly," she said, laughing.

"I was thinking, 'My God, I will be alone! I will not know anyone! How can I survive there? The people are not friendly!' Then I came here, and I can say I was lonely for about two minutes. When I came out of the airplane and got my luggage, I had already met people from UWF and the girl I am living with now."

She and her parents went to Cambridge University in England when she was 14 years old to learn English.

She practiced her English skills by watching movies, reading books and talking with others who spoke English.

She said that Americans smile a lot, and she is amazed by the size of the United States. She is a big fan of American movies.

"I used to watch American movies before I came here," Djadenko said.

Her favorite movies include the Marilyn Monroe film, "Some Like It Hot," and the more recent Kevin Costner film, "The Bodyguard."

Even though there are some things that Djadenko misses about her country, there are other things that she can do without for a while.

"I miss my family, friends and dog," she said.

She loves the warm weather and beaches in Florida and dislikes the cold weather in her country.

"I thought I would be homesick, but after two months I am still having a lot of fun. I am enjoying my independence," Djadenko said.

Learn how to cope with stress of college life

Andy Pennebaker
Staff Writer

There is little doubt that life as a college student can be stressful. For many people, it is the first time in their lives where they are away from their families and friends.

It is often the first time they will have to be responsible for making their own schedules and managing their personal finances.

The desire to succeed at college-level work, build adult relationships and adapt to a lot of change all at once can be overwhelming.

More than 30 percent of college freshmen reported feeling overwhelmed a great deal of the time during the beginning of college, according to a recent University of California at Los Angeles study on stress.

Brian Phillips, a UWF freshman and marine biology major, is having a difficult time adjusting to college.

"I procrastinate, and that stresses me out. I just picked up smoking cigarettes, but that doesn't help," he said.

"The only problem I had in high school is that I didn't have anything to do. Every night, I had all the time in the world to waste," Phillips said. "And now I'm too busy. I have way too much going on. I don't get enough sleep. I get like five hours tops a night, if that."

Sabrina Glover, a pre-professional biology major, is involved with the Student Government Association, Academic Committee and works in enrollment services on campus.

She also has to commute between college campuses, taking eight hours of classes at UWF and four at Pensacola Junior College.

"I don't stress out about my job or about student government. To me, that's fun. I know sometimes it is stressful whenever we have events, but you make it stressful," Glover said. "I like to delegate. Just ask for help."

Although Glover said she gets stressed out during midterms, she has several ways to deal with the stress.

"I exercise. If I'm really uptight about a test, I go to the gym and spend a good hour there just exercising,"



"So one thing I would encourage students to do is organize their work and not pack it all together so it is at a pace where they can have fun and do other

things." Glover said. "I also have a schedule, and I don't change it. And when ever I have a test, I try to stay on the same schedule."

Karen Hagerott, who has a doctorate in psychology and teaches at UWF, said time management is an important skill for students to grasp.

"Having a plan about how you are going to approach your work helps manage the stress so there is not that last-minute panic," she said.

Thomas Westcott, director and assistant dean at the University Advising Center, stresses the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Involvement in physical activities, getting plenty of sleep and eating a well-balanced diet is essential to lowering stress, he said.

"Talk to someone, and reach out. There are lots of people on campus you can talk to for help," he said. "Many times, stress comes from what you tell yourself."

For more information about dealing with stress, the UWF Counseling Center will present a Living Well Workshop scheduled at 3 p.m. today titled "Stress: Quit Stressing About Stress."

The workshop will be held in the Commons, Room 272 and will be presented by J. R. Hap Cox, Counseling Center associate director.

Professors: Who's hot and who's not

Christina Tilton
Assistant Features Editor

Before registering each semester, most students attempt to get the scoop on the instructors for their courses.

No one wants to take a teacher that is really hard, unfair or speaks in a monotone voice that puts them to sleep after the second sentence of the lecture. Not to fear!

Students can go to the Web site www.ratemyprofessors.com to see how previous students have rated their instructors.

Ratemyprofessors.com is a national Web site where students can go to post ratings or see the ratings that others have posted about certain instructors.

The site has a total of 1,126,833 ratings of 248,490 professors at 3,474 schools.

John Swapceinski, founder of ratemyprofessors.com, said he came up with the idea while he was attending San Jose State University in 1999.

"I had one professor who was terrible," Swapceinski said. "She was an unfair grader and rude to her students. I thought a Web site would be a good way to help students avoid professors like her, so I started [Ratemyprofessors.com](http://ratemyprofessors.com)."

The site is very popular among college students. Swapceinski said that his site has been tripping in traffic each year.

"We now get about 400,000 visitors per month, and get 1000-3000 ratings per day," he said.

Teachers at UWF have mixed feelings about the site. Some

think it is a good idea, while others think it is an unfair system since the ratings are based on the few students who know about the site and choose to vote.

According to the site, the overall ratings of a teacher are shown in the result of a smiley face or a frowning face.

The overall rating depends on the helpfulness and approachability of the teacher and the clarity of the course and lectures.

Students can also vote on the ease of the class and the appearance of the teacher, though these do not affect the overall rating. The highest overall rating possible is a five.

"I am glad students have the opportunity to voice their opinion, and I encourage more of my current and former students to go there," Stephen Conroy, assistant professor of economics, said, who got a smiley rating with an overall 3.8.

Conroy said that while he is encouraged by his ratings on the site, he would caution students that these are not statistically valid.

"I have only four student ratings on the site, whereas I have taught more than 650 students in my four years at UWF," he said.

Dale Welch, a computer science instructor, who rated an overall of 3.1, said that he doesn't think much of his ratings. However, he finds them amusing because he can put a name and face to each of the comments he received based on the date of the ratings and the other instructors that were evaluated at the same time.

He finds some of the com-

ments on the site to be useless and immature such as the rating on the appearance of the teacher, hot or not, even though he was voted hot.

Welch said he wonders what students would think of a site where instructors could publicly rate their students.

The teacher evaluations, practically forced on students at UWF at the end of each semester, would be more beneficial in choosing an instructor than the ratemyprofessors.com site, he said.

Julie Westendorf, a marketing and economics instructor, rated as a 5.0 (the best score possible),

also believes the student evaluations in the library are a better way to view student's judgment of an instructor.

Evaluations are available in the John C. Pace Library on the first floor near the reserve materials for students to access if they want more information about future instructors.

To post your ratings on who's a good professor and who is not just to find out what other students have said about instructors, go to www.ratemyprofessors.com. You can also choose the old-fashioned way and view the instructor evaluations in the library.

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Campus Activities

The Campus Activities Board announces the following events planned for November:

November:

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Nov. 5: | Movie - "Pirates of the Caribbean"
6:30/10 p.m. |
| Nov. 6: | Comedian Eric Nieves |
| Nov. 7: | Slam Poetry - Mums 8:30pm |
| Nov. 19: | Open Mic Night 8:30 p.m. |
| Nov. 20: | Mike Super 8:30 p.m. |
| Nov. 24 & 25: | Movie - "American Wedding"
6:30/10 p.m. (both nights) |

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