

Tara Michels brings teaching and research to JCM

Lauren Bigge
The Pendulum

Dr. Tara Michels thoroughly enjoys learning as well as teaching. In fact, learning is as much an integral part of her professional life as teaching.

Though she is constantly busy with her two young children (Andrew is three and Hannah is one and a half) as well as a full teaching schedule, she takes the time to do research about minorities in advertising at Duke University.

She has also done some research on interactive advertising and presented papers about online advertising to the American Academy of Advertising.

Originally from Gainesville, Fla., Michels first became interested in advertising/public relations as an undergraduate when she took classes in the field.

She then got into the stock brokerage industry for seven years before going to work for the non-profit Dairy Council in Florida.

It was during those years that Michels' passion for her current career was refueled. She learned through the public relations experiences the Council pro-

vided that there are various ways of "getting your message out there." She said that "advertising allows for a little more creativity."

After her stint in the Dairy Council, Michels got her Ph.D. at the University of Florida, where she also met husband Randy Patnode as a graduate student. They married in 1994.

She came to Elon from Florida three years ago and is now an assistant professor in the Journalism/ Communications (JCM) department.

Michels likes teaching at Elon because the students are bright and attentive. "I like the [concept of] personal attention to students... I like getting to know my students by name," she said.

Another reason Michels said she enjoys the personal connections among faculty and students is that the professors are encouraged to bring personal experiences from their own lives into the classroom to use as teaching tools and stories of those experiences help the students to learn.

The advertising/public relations professor teaches Organizational Communications, Corporate Communications Senior

Seminar, and Public Relations (during the summer) among others.

However, her favorite class to teach is Honors Media and Society because it "brings up a lot of important [media] issues." Michels said she thinks the Media and Society class is "kind of fun" and thinks it's going pretty well.

Personally, Michels enjoys the climate here in North Carolina more than Florida because she "can't stand the heat." She also commented that she and her husband generally like this area.

Professionally, she is happy to be developing an advertising program for the JCM department and likes working with both interns and professionals in the advertising field.

As for the future of the JCM department, Michels said she



Chris Rash/The Pendulum
Dr. Tara Michels enjoys both the teaching and research aspects of college life in North Carolina

thinks that the renovation of McEwen Library into the new JCM Building will provide many more opportunities for faculty and students because there will be

more space to work with. But as for her own future, Michels is hesitant to speculate. "I'm a 'wait and see' kind of person," she said.

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