

Teaching Beyond the Textbook

DR. SARA MACSWEEN'S COMMITMENT TO REAL-WORLD IMPACT AND STUDENT SUCCESS

Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality and Tourism (MEHT) Senior Lecturer Dr. Sara MacSween recalls the exact moment she fell in love with teaching.

The moment came during her first lecture as an adjunct at UNC Greensboro's Bryan School of Business and Economics in Fall 2014. While preparing for her Consumer Behavior course, she noticed the textbook slides fell a little flat.

"I added my own flair to the slides, and the students laughed. When I saw they appreciated my use of humor to explain the concepts we were covering that day and they were enjoying it, I was hooked," MacSween says.

And so began MacSween's Bryan School journey of "adding her own flair," a path that took her from part-time adjunct to award-winning, full-time professional track senior lecturer.

The Art of Keeping It Real

Students who register for one of MacSween's courses aren't signing up for the textbook version of a classroom experience. From creating marketing plans for actual businesses to learning dining etiquette, MacSween immerses her students into the real world of marketing and business through experiential learning.

"When I create my assignments, I try to replicate what I had to figure out on my own, so students have the opportunity to learn all the skills they're going to need in the workplace," MacSween says.

Right now, she teaches Principles of Marketing, Professional Selling, Consumer Behavior, and Advanced Marketing Management. Each course has standard learning objectives, but MacSween teaches in a style that is all her own, striving to instill lessons that go beyond the subject matter.

Students in her Principles of Marketing class don't just learn how to develop marketing content for a company they're passionate about, they learn how to turn their interests into results. Those who take Professional Selling don't just learn how to deliver a sales pitch without verbal fillers such as "like" and "um," they learn how to communicate effectively.

"Early in the semester, my Professional Selling students are quiet, but by the end, I can't get them to stop talking. They build confidence and relationships," MacSween says.



Doing Meaningful Work

If Principles of Marketing and Professional Selling open students up to MacSween's hands-on teaching style, Advanced Marketing Management pulls them in. The capstone course requires students to create marketing plans for real businesses, and the project has delivered results. In fact, marketing plans developed by students in Advanced Marketing Management have won awards through the Small Business Institute®, proving that they aren't just learning how to make a marketing plan, but they're learning how to do meaningful work.

For MacSween, doing meaningful work sits high on her list of priorities, and she's good at it.

In the past 11 years, MacSween has won the Bryan School Teaching Excellence Award twice, the Eloise McCain Hassell Teaching Excellence Award, the Sue W. Cole Professional Track Distinguished Faculty Endowment, and the Anna Marie Gove Award for Teaching Excellence. Along the way, she even earned a doctorate in Business Administration from the University of Liverpool in 2024.

The awards are a bonus to MacSween's career. The students are her "why" at the heart of it all. They're why she gives thoughtful feedback on assignments, advises two Bryan School student organizations, and never hesitates to help her students, even if it's with choosing a job interview outfit.

"I'm happy to help with those things because sometimes students don't have someone within their family to ask. It's important that they get that information from someone," she says.

Creating Safe Spaces

MacSween's students take a wealth of real-world knowledge with them when they leave the classroom, but they also remember the extra mile she ran for them. Sometimes, it truly is the little things that stick – just ask Lynette Jimenez '24.

"I'll never forget how she always talked to us like we were her friends, but she still held us accountable for our work and our actions," Jimenez says. "I think that's why so many students feel comfortable in her class. I know I did."

That balance of approachability and expectation created a classroom culture where students felt both supported and empowered. For Jimenez, one moment in particular captured that spirit.

"We had this inside joke in my class that turned into a catchphrase," she says. "When the semester would get tough, she'd always say 'we're all going to make it, guys.' It's something I still say now."

Keeping it real and keeping her students confident that they are, in fact, going to make it – that's the name of Sara MacSween's game.

She's made quite a mark over the past 11 years, and MacSween doesn't have plans to stop teaching anytime soon. You'll find her at home in the Bryan School, growing, learning, and doing meaningful work with her own flair.

"I think it's important that we never stop learning and trying new things. Exposing ourselves to new ideas and new places gives us a better idea of ourselves and the world around us," she says. "That's why I love teaching. It's my passion." ■

READ ONLINE

go.uncg.edu/bbr_teaching_beyond_textbooks

"I think it's important that we never stop learning and trying new things."

DR. SARA MACSWEEN
Senior Lecturer

