

Graduating Biology Major Pursues Dentistry Career

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It took some time for Mike Neveu, a senior in the UNH Manchester Biology program, to decide on his career path. Clearly, taking that time has paid off. Neveu, this year's student commencement speaker, already has his next steps mapped out. And besides

being a successful student, throughout his college career Neveu managed to operate his own business and maintain his family life.

When it came time to graduate from Goffstown High School in 1996, Neveu was not college-bound. He didn't get great grades in school, nor did he take the SATs. He "didn't feel it was necessary to go" – his parents hadn't so, like them, he jumped right into the workforce.

Neveu remained in Goffstown and did a variety of jobs, including working as a butcher for a few years. But in 2001, following successful rehabilitation from a car accident, Neveu was inspired become a massage therapist.

In the following years, Neveu continued his career in massage therapy. He also got married and started a family. As his skills and reputation grew, he founded Pro Touch Professional Massage and began teaching massage therapy classes. While his teaching career gave him confidence, he found himself desiring to be on the receiving end of knowledge. Neveu found himself often making comments to his wife that started with, "If I had gone to school..."

As these remarks increased in frequency, Neveu's wife encouraged him to go to college, and he applied to the University of New Hampshire's Durham campus. Since he hadn't had any recent course credits, and his high school grades were less than stellar, Neveu was denied admission. But that didn't deter him. He followed up with the UNH admissions staff, and asked what he could do to improve his chances of acceptance.

Neveu was suggested to take courses at a community college to prove he could handle courses in higher education. He took assessments in writing and math, with assessments of the latter showing he needed two years of math to be at the desired level. With realigned focus and fierce ambition, Neveu began self-tutoring.

He prepared himself for trigonometry and pre-calculus, shaving a full year off of the recommendations from the assessment. He began taking classes at Manchester Community College, and during this time he met a representative from UNH Manchester at a college fair. After two semesters at MCC, Neveu transferred to UNH Manchester – a decision, he said, that changed his life for the better.

Not only did most of his credits transfer seamlessly, but it was affordable. Neveu received a transfer student scholarship and a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) scholarship. His foray in massage therapy sparked his interest in healthcare, so Neveu entered into the Biological Sciences program to pursue a career in dentistry.

Besides his determination and hard work, Neveu credits his success to the opportunities he has had at UNH Manchester.

"I like the community feel. The small teacher-student ratio provides the opportunity to build relationships with professors," Neveu said. "Professors have an open door policy and take a real interest in the success of their students."

When asked if he felt different being older than other students of his academic year, Neveu said it's "a non-factor." He said he feels he has blended in well, and tutoring has allowed him to be equally connected to his peers, regardless of age. Neveu became a tutor shortly after transferring to UNH Manchester, helping students in subjects like calculus, statistics and organic chemistry. His dedication to his peers' education was not unnoticed, earning him the Outstanding Tutor Award in 2013. Neveu was also actively involved in open houses, the new Pre-Dental Club and the campus a cappella group Milling Around.

"There is no lack of opportunity to get involved," Neveu said.

Mike admits that taking his time to find this path hasn't been easy. With a family to provide for, he has needed assistance to make it happen. But he said determination is key, and "when you're ready to be committed, it's time."

With commencement fast approaching, Neveu has laid plans for the next four years. He will attend Tufts University School of Dental Medicine this fall to pursue his Doctor of Dental Medicine degree. His goal is to practice general dentistry, and continue to make a difference in peoples' lives.

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