

MIZZOU

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Around the Columns

Finding a comfort zone in the classroom

In the late 1990s, Richard Meadows received a letter in the mail encouraging him to apply for an MU College of Veterinary Medicine faculty position. Without a second thought, he tossed it in the recycling bin. At the time, he desired neither to teach nor move to Missouri. Meadows says his life was seemingly as perfect as a beer commercial: He had built a private veterinary practice, a job he loved, in San Antonio, a city he adored.

When his wife found the letter in the bin, however, she convinced him that the job description sounded so much like him that he ought to apply.

Now, 11 years later, it would be an understatement to say the MU job wound up being a good fit. In March, Meadows received the 2010 National Pfizer Teaching Award, considered the most prestigious veterinary teaching honor in the U.S.

“I teach like I was taught by the professors who had the biggest impression on me,” says Meadows, a teaching professor and director of the community practice section within the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital. “I treat students with respect, like they are young colleagues of mine. They know a lot coming in, so I’m just reminding them of what they should know and helping them to get all the facts straight in their heads.”



Although initially reluctant to enter academia, Richard Meadows has scooped up numerous teaching awards, including the 2010 National Pfizer Teaching Award. Photo courtesy of the College of Veterinary Medicine




Since he began at Mizzou in 1999, Meadows has racked up numerous teaching awards including a 2003 Golden Chalk Award, a 2005 William T. Kemper Excellence in Teaching Fellowship Award and a 2008 Missouri Governor’s Teaching Excellence Award, among others.

“I’m a shy person, but I’m not shy in this environment because this is my comfort zone,” says Meadows, who lectures for two-plus hours each day and works one-on-one with students who treat patients in the teaching hospital.

He has also directed the HOPE (Helping Overpopulation through Education) Project, which brings a vanload of veterinary students to low-income areas of Kansas City, Mo., to spay and neuter cats and dogs. Meadows says watching students grow as they gain experience is a “magical transformation” that’s just “plain cool.”

“When they say, ‘I can’t do this,’ I’m there to say ‘Yes, you can,’ and ‘Yes, you better.’ ”

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