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Alumni Profile

Land of opportunity

Some people dream their whole lives of becoming a doctor. Others, such as Simon McKeown, discover the dream much later.

English-born McKeown was 29 years old and studying religious education at Cambridge University when “it dawned on him slowly” that he wanted to be a doctor. The idea was unexpected, and so was the reaction he got from British universities and advisers. McKeown had not taken math and science since age 15, and he had never even used a computer or pocket calculator. He was told that he was too old and unqualified to be accepted into medical school.

“I was literally laughed at and told I was wasting my time,” he says. “I didn’t even get one interview.”

But with encouragement from his father and his Missouri-native wife, Julie, he decided to try his luck in America. He and Julie moved to Missouri, and he applied to Mizzou. He was accepted and began working his way through prerequisites and required courses, even getting overrides for higher-level courses. He passed the MCAT and worked his way through medical school. While in med school, he used his religious studies background and became a chaplain in the hospitals to gain experience in the environment.

“It was difficult. We had several tough years with me going through school and us having children,” McKeown says. “Luckily, everyone from my family and Mizzou was really supportive.”

McKeown credits Mizzou with giving him the chance to pursue his dream.



Photo by Rob Hill




“I was given the opportunity,” he says. “I took it, and I worked like the dickens. They said, ‘OK, we’ll give you the chance, and you prove to us it’s the right decision.’ Literally, they said ‘show-me’ what you can do.”

McKeown now resides in Mexico, Mo., with Julie and their seven children. He practices family medicine at Audrain Family Health Care and is proud that his “crazy idea” worked out.

“I belong here,” he says. “I always wanted to go into family medicine. I’ve had dreams of pursuing sports medicine; I still do. Who knows? Maybe one day.”

McKeown knows he has all he needs to pursue any future career goals. Opportunity is key. —
Amanda Dahling

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