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THE SCREECH PODCAST

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IN FOCUS: DR. RENEE BOURDEAUX

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By Marissa Johnston

Photo credit Molli Henderson



Dr. Renee Bourdeaux is one of the newest faculty members to the Communication Department at Northwest University. She and her family relocated this summer from their lifetime home of North Dakota, so that she could combine her passions for teaching, communication, relationships and faith as a NU professor.

Bourdeaux grew up over a thousand miles from Kirkland, on her family's farm in Huff, North Dakota. A farming community with a population of approximately 100 people at the time, Huff's two main buildings were a Catholic church and a barn. As a result, Bourdeaux and other students in Huff caught the school bus at 6:45 am to ride to neighboring town Mandan, where school began at 9:05 am. The ride home was just as long. She grew up loving school and learning, and developed a passion for science.

When Bourdeaux finished high school and started at the University of North Dakota, she wanted to be a chemical engineer. After job shadowing a professional, however, she made the important realization that she did not like the work environment. One crucial element was missing, and that was communication. There was a lack of interaction and conversation, and Bourdeaux discovered that was something she needed in her chosen line of work. She prayed about it, asking God to clarify what made her happy, and came to the conclusion that being able to talk and interact with people was something that fulfilled her. Bourdeaux changed her major to communication.

That decision quickly proved to be the right choice, as Bourdeaux loved her courses. She completed her bachelor's in communication, and continued at the University of North Dakota to receive her master's, which specialized in interpersonal communication and researched the positivity and resilience between romantic relationships. She worked as a Residence Hall Director, Vice President of Communication and Marketing, and Instructor. Soon, she was working on a coctorate in communication at North Dakota State University, so she could become a professor and use her passion for talking as the focus of her career. She completed her doctorate program in Spring 2016, and moved to Northwest University this fall.

When asked why she chose NU, Bourdeaux answered, "If I could've made a list of all the coolest things I ever wanted to do in my job, I don't think I could've made a job as perfect as my job here."

Though it was hard to leave their home in North Dakota, Bourdeaux and her family knew that she was called to NU. After visiting the university and interviewing for the position, she even received confirmation from a stranger sitting next to her on the flight back. When she looked troubled, he began talking with her and revealed that he was a Christian and had been praying for her the whole flight. God provided her with numerous confirmations. From general feelings of peace, being able to teach classes that align with her passions, and seeing the campus' breath-taking beauty, she knew that NU was right where she needed to be.

"The icing on the cake was talking with professors Helmcke and Mari, and the level of energy we had coming into this year, being able to work as a team," she said.

Bourdeaux is teaching three courses this fall: Fundamentals of Speech Communication, Interpersonal Communications, and Conflict

Resolution. She is ecstatic about the ability to combine expression of her faith with teaching classes on concepts she loves. Her favorite aspect of her job was so far, is being able to blast Christian music in her office while she works. It helps her keep God in mind as she prepares her coursework, and gives her a spiritual boost that lasts throughout the day.

Dr. William Mari, a fellow communications professor, commemorated Bourdeaux, saying, "Renee brings not just her Ph.D. but her heart to our program. Her research on positive interpersonal communication, her joy with engaging with students, and her passion for teaching is evident and a gift to NU. I'm excited to see her impact grow over time on communication studies. I know my work is enriched by her being here."

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