

Back in School: Journalism Prof Juggles MBA Pursuit with Dad Duties

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*It's not an easy decision to go back to school. Adding classes on top of work and family responsibilities can be stressful. But plenty of University of Arizona employees have taken the leap, taking advantage of the **Qualified Tuition Reduction** ^[1] to build their skills through master's and doctoral programs.*

Over the next several weeks, LQP will profile some of these employees to find out why they chose to go back to school and how they're striking the balance between work, school and life.

If you're on the fence about going back to school, we'll provide some tips and information along the way that could help you make the decision, from how QTR works to how to choose a master's program. If there are specific questions you'd like answered, let us know by sending an email to uaatwork@email.arizona.edu ^[2].

Learn more details about QTR at the end of this article.

A bachelor's degree was enough to get Michael McKisson a job in the School of Journalism, but he knew he would need an advanced degree in order to move ahead in his career.

He was working for the Arizona Daily Star when he received his undergraduate degree from the School of Journalism at the age of 28, and shortly after became an adjunct professor for the school, teaching courses in entrepreneurial journalism.

He says he knew that in order to move from his entry-level adjunct position to a full-time, more established professor of practice position, he would need to get an advanced degree.

The **Eller Evening MBA** ^[3] program fit well considering the scope of his work and appealed to him because it's tailored toward working professionals.

In the midst of his second year taking classes, an associate professor of practice position became open in the School of Journalism. McKisson went for it and was selected contingent on the completion of his MBA by the end of 2013.

Now working as an associate professor of practice, he's finished with his required courses and finishing up his last two elective courses, which will finish in December.

"To balance everything, you have to really prioritize," McKisson said. "People always say, 'Oh, you're so busy, I don't know how you do it all.' You just do. But the thing is, it's the family that really sacrifices."

Students in Eller Evening MBA program attend class from 4-10 p.m. every Wednesday, which meant McKisson's wife was responsible for feeding, bathing and putting the couple's children to bed on her own.

The couple has a 3-year-old daughter and a 1-year-old son, who was born about midway through McKisson's MBA journey.

"My wife actually went into labor in the middle of one of the classes," he remembers. "It was a Wednesday night around 8 o'clock and I was just like, 'I've got to go!'"

He says having a newborn at home while working toward his MBA made things especially challenging, but working efficiently as possible helped him manage all of his responsibilities.

"Obviously, you've got your commitments to work, so you do those," he said. "You've got family commitments, you have to do those. Plus, you have school commitments. Sometimes things fall through the cracks. You just have to do your best and get as much done as you can."

In addition to using to-do lists, McKisson's recommendation for employees taking classes are to look for ways to leverage the projects they're doing in the office and the classroom.

"If you need to write a report at work and it ties into something you're doing in class, that can be really beneficial," he said. "Or if it's not something you've been assigned at work, but could be useful to your department and it's an assignment for school, try to do it for your work and then give it to your boss to show the value they can get out of it as well."

One month before McKisson officially receives his MBA, he's already exploring Ph.D. programs, although he's unsure exactly what he will focus on. He says he plans to wait a year before starting the next phase of his education. By then, his daughter will be starting kindergarten, which will make taking classes a little easier for his family.

"You sort of go into it thinking it's going to be hard for two years, and hopefully you'll see the rewards," he says.

Next week, we'll profile La Monica Everett-Haynes, who is has been pursuing her doctorate in higher education while working full time for the UA's Office of University Communications.

About Qualified Tuition Reduction

If you're employed at 50 percent time or more, and your employment is expected to continue six months or more, you're eligible for QTR. The program was established by the **Arizona Board of Regents** ^[4] and applies to each of Arizona's three universities.

Although the program does not cover campus, course or laboratory fees, it does provide a significant discount on tuition. Qualified employees pay just \$25 in tuition for up to nine credit hours in the fall and spring, and up to six during summer sessions. Plus, their domestic partners, dependent children and children of domestic partners are also eligible for the discount.

More details on the program and eligibility are available on the **Human Resources** ^[1] website. If you're interested in getting a degree and have a program of interest in mind, check out the **Tuition and Fees Calculator** ^[5] on the Bursar's Office website to estimate your costs after with the QTR benefit.

Source URL: <https://uaatwork.arizona.edu/lqp/back-school-journalism-prof-juggles-mba-pursuit-dad-duties>

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[1] http://www.hr.arizona.edu/qualified_tuition_reduction [2] <mailto:uaatwork@email.arizona.edu> [3] <https://ellermba.arizona.edu/evening/> [4] <http://www.azregents.edu/> [5] <http://www.bursar.arizona.edu/students/fees/index.asp>