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—Barbara
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Thanks to Barbara
Prudhomme White—
here with Courtney
Dimick and Danielle
Olivieri—*Stressed Out*
students learn to use
techniques like humor,
exercise, and yoga to
manage stress.





EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

BARBARA PRUDHOMME WHITE

*Associate Professor of Occupational Therapy
College of Health and Human Services*

AFTER MORE THAN A DECADE working with infants and their parents in a neonatal intensive care unit, Barbara Prudhomme White had an epiphany: while her work in a clinical setting was rewarding, what she really wanted to do was teach and conduct research.

For Prudhomme White, the best way to prepare was to return to the classroom—as a student. “When I began teaching, I discovered that excellent teaching is a learned skill,” she says. “As teachers, we model ourselves after those we’ve had, so I crafted my graduate program to include courses on college teaching.” She sat in on classes presented by bright, engaging faculty and saw first-hand what was most effective, both for her and for the students in the class. “I learned to be mindful of what it takes to engage students and how to critique myself. I never take my work in the classroom for granted,” she adds.

Another important lesson was that her greatest teaching strength is her innate ability to draw in students. “All my classes include activities that allow students to engage with me, with each other, and with the material,” Prudhomme White notes.

One such class is Stressed Out, a popular course Prudhomme White developed to teach students about the human stress response. In Stressed Out, students learn about managing stress with time management, humor, exercise, meditation, and yoga, and how to use the positive aspects of stress. She also integrates data from her research on procrastination, stress and health, and stress in pregnant women and children with autism.

This summer, Prudhomme White worked with senior Danielle Oliveri to research the stress response in children on the autism spectrum. “Professor White was enthusiastic about working with me immediately,” Oliveri says, “and suggested that we develop a grant proposal. This experience has been much more than I expected. We know so little about autism, and I am grateful for the opportunity to help us learn more.”

—Donna Eason