

# Megan Lupek

**Maria Gallardo-Williams:** Hello and welcome. I am Maria Gallardo Williams from the Office for Faculty Excellence, and today I am talking to Megan Lupek, who is our Faculty Fellow for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Welcome, Megan.

**Megan Lupek:** Hi, Maria. Glad to be here. Thanks for having me.

**Maria Gallardo-Williams:** Thank you for joining us. So I'm going to start by asking you to tell us a little bit about yourself.

What is your background?

**Megan Lupek:** Sure. So I was born and raised in Michigan in the metro Detroit area. I went to Albion College, which is a small liberal arts school for my undergraduate degree and majored in biology with a concentration in environmental science and a minor in psychology. I originally wanted to do something in field work that allowed me to work with endangered species.

But as I was trying to figure out my career path, I took a year off in between my undergraduate degree and grad school and worked a few [00:01:00] temporary technician type positions. And through that, I realized that I actually wanted to work more on the social sciences side of things. And really recognize that humans are the ones who are causing all of these environmental losses.

So we should probably be studying them and how we make our environmental decisions. And looking back, at my degree and from undergrad I was really trying to move in that direction without knowing it. With my background in environmental sciences, and I just picked up the minor in psychology because it was something I was interested in.

I had no idea that I could combine my interests until after I got my degree. So I went to graduate school at Auburn University and got my Ph. D. in forestry and wildlife sciences with a concentration in the human dimensions of natural resources. And it was in grad school that I figured out that I really enjoy teaching.

So I had the opportunity to be a teaching assistant. I got to do a few guest [00:02:00] lectures. And even before I knew what it was called, I really gravitated towards active learning. So I would have students do an activity

during a class instead of just me doing a lecture. And post grad school, I began teaching at an online university, and that's where I found out that online teaching is cool too and so all of these things kind of led to a position at NC State where I get to combine all of the things that I love, including environmental sciences And being an environmental social scientist as well as teaching, online teaching, and incorporating active learning in the classroom.

**Maria Gallardo-Williams:** Awesome. I'm so glad you told me that. I didn't know a lot of those things. So next, can you tell us one unique thing about yourself?

**Megan Lupek:** Sure. So one of my favorite hobbies is submitting observations to the citizen science app iNaturalist. So , for iNaturalist, you take a [00:03:00] picture of some kind of creature.

It could be a plant or an animal. And then you upload it to the app and the app helps you to identify the species of the creature that you submitted. The observation is then verified by experts on the platform. And my very favorite thing to take pictures of is bugs. I have become so fascinated with bugs in the last five years or so.

And it's so bad that my husband will be in the backyard and call me back there to be like, look at this cool beetle. You're gonna need to take a picture and submit it to iNaturalist. And so I think that if I went back in time I'd major in entomology or maybe somehow combine the social science and entomology somehow.

But but yeah, it's my very favorite thing. I think my last observation that I uploaded was a red legged grasshopper. There's just so many bugs out there that I had no idea about, so like I said, I've just become fascinated.

**Maria Gallardo-Williams:** That's wonderful. And they're very unique, you're right about that. [00:04:00] Tell us what is your academic department at NC State and what do you teach there?

**Megan Lupek:** I'm the co director of the Environmental Sciences major and an assistant teaching professor in the Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources.

So that's in the College of Natural Resources. And I teach the online section of ES 100, which is Introduction to Environmental Science. And I also teach ES 400, which is our capstone course for environmental science seniors.

**Maria Gallardo-Williams:** . And what attracted you to the role of faculty fellow within the Office for Faculty Excellence?

**Megan Lupek:** Well, I've always been a big fan of the Office for Faculty Excellence. So as soon as I got to NC State in my first semester, I was signing up for opportunities through OFE, like workshops and reading circles.

And I was just so impressed with the passion of the folks working in that office. And was just so inspired by all the things that I was learning from them that I, I feel like I just became [00:05:00] this you know, a fan girl of OFE. And so when I felt like I had developed enough skills that like I felt like I could pass things along to others, that's when I decided to apply for, faculty fellow role within OFE. And so it's been really great to be on the other side of things and be part of the thing that I was fangirling about all this time.

And can you tell our listeners what is your area within OFE and what do you like about it?

Yeah,

so I am the SOTL Faculty Fellow or Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

And so I help with the SOTL Institute and try to elevate SOTL research on campus. And so what I love about it is that I'm able to introduce faculty to SOTL research, which is often a new type of research for them. And so it's great to be able to show them how their research can help them become better educators by better understanding their students and gaining more knowledge about their learning outcomes of their [00:06:00] classes.

And I also just love learning from others. And so one of my favorite things is being able to see what other faculty are doing in their classroom. And. I just, I'm so inspired by them and, , trying to see how I could potentially translate what they're doing into my own classroom and just learning from them has been great.

So it's not only am I teaching them about SoTL research, but I'm also learning from and with them.

**Maria Gallardo-Williams:** And what advice would you give to other faculty members that might be interested in similar roles? How could they prepare for it or , whatever helped you to get to this role.

**Megan Lupek:** I would say apply for the opportunities that interest you.

NC State has so many amazing opportunities that I think that the tricky part, at least for me, has been to realize that you don't have to try to do them all at once. So my advice would be to go for it, but do it strategically and see how it fits into your overall , career goals , and your career path and things [00:07:00] like that and to, not lose track of those opportunities.

So realize that , they're not going anywhere. And talk to people who are in those roles and see what advice they have get a better understanding of what the role is to see where and how it would best fit into your career journey. And along with that, I would say just keep a wild ideas journal as well to keep track of all of those ideas that you have that you might not be able to do right away that you want to do sometime in the future.

**Maria Gallardo-Williams:** Thank you so much for talking with us today, Megan. We appreciate it.

**Megan Lupek:** No problem. Thank you so much for having me.