

Fishin' with ambition

By: Vanessa Turner

UNT early graduate is dedicated to leaving the university in a better place than he found it, however that may be.

(DENTON, Texas – Sept. 16, 2021) Stressed, depressed and hard-work-obsessed are just three of the words that best describe the work ethic of Michael Fish.

On average, it takes most undergraduates four years and 15 credit hours each semester to graduate with one major and one minor. Just two and a half years after graduating high school, Fish is wrapping up his undergraduate at the University of North Texas.

With the help of high school honors classes, dual-credit, advanced placement, and summer classes, Fish is a 20-year-old senior majoring in political science with a double minor in history and communication studies. Following his departure from UNT in December 2021, Fish is headed off to graduate school.



Michael Fish, UNT political science student.

“My plans for graduate school change depending on what schools I get into, and where I even want to go,” he explains, using his hands for emphasis. “It’s all a vocational process and I like having options, but they all revolve around political science.”

Fish is more than just a smart guy with an aquatic last name. He looks like a shy, soft-spoken kid but once he gets going, it’s hard to make him stop. He talks fast and speaks with purpose and means exactly what he says when he says it.

His self-discipline and academic drive can be credited to the time he spent on his high school marching band, speech and debate team, and the summers spent working with Texas politicians, lobbying with public officials, and interning with Dallas-Fort Worth based government organizations just to pass the time.

Fish grew up in Keller, a suburb in Tarrant County, where the political climate is different from one that most young adults tend to agree with. His vague interest in politics has snowballed into years of learning about international relations, public policy, history and more.

“I don’t even really like political science, but at this point I’m in too deep,” he says, fidgeting on the couch. “I was hooked by the 2016 presidential election, and with how fast I’ve gone through undergraduate, I’ve never had time to change my major.”

In his spare time, Fish has been involved in several research projects with the university since his freshman year. His most recent project involves comparing the effects that former United States president Donald Trump and India’s prime minister Narendra Modi have had within their respective political parties.

“I’m looking to see how both men have capitalized on their own cults of personality, nationalistic rhetoric and policy,” he says on an inhale. “We’re just looking to see what we can learn from them both.”

His involvement in research projects has made him an extremely outspoken person, not only in the classroom or in extracurriculars, but also online. Fish is adamant about addressing student concerns, and

advocates for UNT students on Twitter, where students are most vocal about their opinions and concerns with the university. Fish is the kind of person that knows when something is wrong and can quickly find a solution to fix it.

More recently, a popular topic of discussion is how the university is handling the COVID-19 situation on campus. After a year and a half doing online school and distanced learning, students are apprehensive to get back into the classroom. College campuses are notorious for being somewhat of a petri dish when it comes to sicknesses outside of being in a pandemic, so right now is a challenging time.

“Given that the university administration has to follow Gov. Abbott’s policies and given that there’s a lot of money on the line because we’re a public state school, our administration has the students’ best interest at heart,” he says, looking at his hands. “There isn’t much we can do but wear masks and do what we already know has an impact on minimalizing cases on campus. I’m just as scared of getting sick as the next guy.”

Students are heavily encouraged to get vaccinated, wear a mask, and social distance when they can. A recent health update from the university president says:

“With COVID-19 cases on the rise again, especially among those who remain unvaccinated, I request that all students, faculty, and staff comply with a new mandate from the City of Denton to wear a face covering indoors per CDC guidance for our region. If you are not vaccinated, I urge you to do so as soon as possible to protect yourself, your friends and family, and our campus. Vaccines reduce the chance of experiencing severe impacts from COVID-19 and minimize transmission of the disease.”

Outside of the classroom, Fish holds a position as a senior supplemental instruction leader in both political science and history.



Michael Fish, UNT political science and history department supplemental instruction leader.

As a supplemental instruction leader, his job is to act as an on-call teaching assistant for beginner and intermediate level political science and history courses. After last year’s COVID-19 shutdown, Fish was a large part of the committee that helped get the program back on track for in-person instruction once the university would allow it.

“We had a massive staff shakeup this past summer, and within that, we lost a lot of our coordinators and couldn’t find brand new people,” he says. “As one of the most senior members of our program, I helped to facilitate that transition back to in-person instruction. We did a great job, too. We’re still drastically understaffed but the program is still functional, and we have big plans for how to not only bounce back, but also to improve things within our program.

On the outside, Fish is just a 5’7” kid sitting in the library scrolling through TikTok like everyone else, but beyond that, he’s got an impressive resume, a portfolio full of research projects, experience lobbying and working with Texas politicians, and much more.

To some, Fish is just someone who’s outspoken about politics, but more than that, he’s a student who cares. After 2 and a half years at UNT, it’s safe to say that once Fish graduates in December 2021, he will have left a lasting impression on his classmates and his professors.

Promotional Tweet:

“Michael Fish was a UNT freshman that got involved in any and everything to find out what he likes. Now he’s months away from an early graduation with an impressive resume and a list of graduate schools to fall back on. Read more about Michael at #UNTEarlyGrad #GMG”

Potential media outlets:

- The North Texan alumni page would be interested in Michael’s story because he’s going to be a UNT alumni and he has a very unique story to tell.
- NTDaily does pieces on students' successes and interesting student stories. I think they would be interested in this considering that Michael is a very interesting student to read about.
- Fox 4 News KDFW would also be interested in Michael’s story because he’s a local student with an impressive resume. He has done countless lobbying events and is a big advocate for Dallas politics. This would be a good tool for parents of younger children to see and have them inspired by Michael’s story.