

Memphis woman leads international organization

By By Eunice J. Hart
Special to The Commercial Appeal

Wednesday, November 26, 2008

Peggy Quinn says she tries to serve as a role model for her students at University of Memphis, to teach them to design and manage their careers.

Quinn, an assistant professor and director of fashion merchandising, is also the newly elected president of Executive Women International, a nonprofit organization of business, service and professional company representatives that has 4,000 members and 75 chapters in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

Anna Hough, Memphis EWI chapter president, said members help each other's business goals.

"If I am planning a trip and there are no hotel rooms to be had in that city, I can call someone from the local chapter, and they will find something for me," she said.

Hough, owner of Captivating Interiors, introduced Quinn and her students to the organization when she was a student at the U of M. She thinks Quinn is a good fit as president.

"She's a good leader because she delegates and is organized," she said. As a teacher, Quinn "is so dynamic, and I've seen her change students' lives," Hough said.

Quinn has represented the University of Memphis in EWI for 11 years, practicing what she teaches her students.

"I preach to my students that not only is it important to develop academically, you need to continue to develop yourself personally and professionally," she said.

A graduate of the former Sacred Heart Academy in Memphis, Quinn went to University of Tennessee at Knoxville for her bachelor's degree in education, and earned a master's in education from Memphis State University. She worked for years as an assistant fashion director, fashion buyer and visual merchandiser, for the former John Gerber Co. in Knoxville and Goldsmith's in Memphis.

"It's a very demanding career, difficult to get into and move up in. You have to interpret consumers' demands and be knowledgeable about the economy," Quinn said.

In the 1980s, she returned to education, launching the fashion merchandising program in the Memphis City Schools at Wooddale High School. She taught at Shelby State Community College before moving to the U of M 22 years ago.

Quinn's graduating seniors submit a final project, usually more than 100 pages long, filled with business plans, budgets, store diagrams and marketing plans.

"It's more than what people see, which is the retail part," Quinn said of her subject.

It's a career that Quinn has managed to turn into one of her own design, combining fashion with education.

Peggy Quinn

Age: 58

Education: B.A. in education, University of Tennessee at Knoxville; M.A. in education from Memphis State University.

Personal: Quinn and her husband, Charlie, senior vice president at SunTrust Bank, have three adult sons.

Hobby: Shopping



© 2009 Scripps Newspaper Group — Online