

## Horn Lake Student Finds Career Through Injury

Contributed by Jennifer Farish  
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Michael Manning to receive diploma Saturday at UM commencement

Michael Manning

OXFORD, Miss. - Six years ago, Michael Manning lay in a hospital bed unsure of his future. An automobile accident had left him paralyzed from the waist down and unable to return to his job with a railroad company.

On Saturday (May 9), Manning, 28, of Horn Lake, will begin a new future as he and other students receive degrees from the University of Mississippi. Manning majored in nutrition and dietetics in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, part of the School of Applied Sciences. He is among the school's 489 graduates who will be awarded diplomas at 11 a.m. at the Indoor Practice Facility.

A graduate of Horn Lake High School, Manning was 23 when he was injured after falling asleep driving home from work. After 32 days on life support and a year of rehabilitation in Atlanta, Manning began trying to figure out his next step.

Ironically, the path he chose resulted from his experience in the hospital and in rehabilitation.

"I had a dietitian in the hospital who was really cool, and I thought I might enjoy it because of how much nutrition plays into being paralyzed," he said.

Manning explained that immediately after his injury his body began to drop a large amount of weight as it tried to heal.

"I checked in the hospital the day of the wreck weighing 195 pounds, and the day I got out I weighed 145 pounds," he said. "Basically, my body was just burning calories trying to heal itself. I also found that nutrition plays a role in preventing pressure sores and other issues related to being paralyzed."

Manning enrolled at Ole Miss thinking he wanted to pursue a degree that would allow him to work with nutrition in a hospital like the nutritionists who helped him. However, the longer he spent in a classroom instead of a hospital room, the more Manning became sure that he wanted to do something else.

"I thought that's what I wanted to do, but the more I was out of the hospital, the more I didn't want to have to go back," he said.

Having worked in restaurant kitchens throughout high school, Manning changed his focus from strictly nutrition to food

service management and took a number of business and management classes. He plans to pursue a career as a food service director for a school or organization.

Kathy Knight, associate professor in the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, has served as Manning's adviser and mentor over the past four years. She said that Manning has radiated enthusiasm and confidence throughout that time.

"Even as he has grown academically, he has kept the same positive attitude, sense of humor and absolute refusal to let anyone define his abilities," she said. "Quantity food production is grueling work for anyone with four limbs working in perfect order. We started talking about ways that we could accommodate Michael, but he was having none of it."

FCS department chair Teresa Carithers said Manning was a leader in student organizations and an inspiration to the department.

"He has a very open reality-based approach to his disability," she said. "We feel he has tremendous potential because of his desire to succeed."

With family looking on, Manning will begin an exciting new phase in his life Saturday as he receives his diploma at Ole Miss, where he also met his wife-to-be, Jenna Newland of Minnesota. Just last week, the couple bought a house in Batesville, and they are looking forward to getting married and settling into jobs.

For more information about the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences, visit <http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/fcs> . To learn more about the School of Applied Sciences, visit [http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/applied\\_sciences/](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/applied_sciences/) .