What do students call you?
Alicia or Dr. Meuret.

What do you teach?
The courses I teach the most often are abnormal psychology (undergraduate) and psychopathology (doctoral). I have also taught research methods, a graduate seminar in clinical psychology, and a specialty seminar on depression and anxiety for undergraduates. Apart from the formal classes, I train doctoral students in diagnostic assessments of psychiatric illnesses, evidence-based psychotherapy, psychophysiological assessments, and designing, analyzing, and publishing scientific studies in clinical psychology. I also train undergraduate students who work in our lab in all areas of clinical psychological research.

What would you consider to be your greatest accomplishment to date?
I hope that my greatest accomplishment is (or will be) to train a new generation of clinical scientists, therapists, and students to understand and appreciate the complexities of mental
illness. I believe that under my mentorship, past and current students have learned to critically evaluate notions about mental illness, have grown empathy for the profound suffering endured by individuals affected with these complex disorders, and have found inspiration to study new methods to better understand and treat psychiatric illness.

I view the mentoring of young women, both at the undergraduate and graduate level, as a particular mission of mine. In light of the predominantly female presence in psychology at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, this may not seem an obvious goal. However, I believe that today’s world of science is unnecessarily intimidating for young women. Consequently, too many cases exist of young women with tremendous potential ultimately abandoning their scientific aspirations because of a lack of role models, guidance, and encouragement. As female faculty, and mother, I feel that I am in an important position to serve with my advice. My effort to involve female students in my laboratory for independent research has been highly rewarding for me. Students have noted that it made a difference to their future career planning. It makes me proud to think that I may have contributed to their decisions to go on to apply for graduate school. By actively encouraging and involving these young women in research, I hope to encourage them to pursue a career in clinical psychology with the ultimate goal of becoming well-rounded scientists.

My most memorable classroom experience or student is...

My most memorable experiences are when I can see the spark of my own passion and fascination for my research area come alive in my student(s). I enjoy when I see astonishment, curiosity, fascination, empathy, and excitement.

My pet peeves are...

I get very disheartened about psychiatric myths. They unnecessarily contribute to treatment delay or rejection, illness relapse, humiliation, and discrimination of people with diagnosed mental illnesses. It is incomprehensible to me that to this day, people still hold beliefs that sufferers are lazy, dangerous, or untreatable. I also get irritated by disrespect towards psychologists or the field of psychiatric research. Sadly, this disrespect is sometimes even expressed by other medical professionals. It is harmful because it undermines one of the most complex of all areas of medicine: the study of the brain, emotions, and behaviors.

Where I worked before I became a professor at SMU...

Before coming to SMU in 2005, I was a postdoctoral fellow at two psychology departments in Boston: the Affective Neuroscience Laboratory at Harvard University and the Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders at Boston University. Before that, I was conducting my doctoral dissertation at the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Stanford University.

Something most people don’t know about me is...

That I was never a particularly good student in school, especially not elementary school. In fact, I was such a poor performer that my wise parents arranged for a psychological assessment for me, which at that time was extremely uncommon. That brief encounter was a life-saver. The psychologist (along with a number of other central people in my life) gave me the confidence to believe in myself and to persevere. Once I was out of school and allowed to follow my true passions, I was able to spread my wings. My dream at the age of 11, to become a psychologist, came true.

Something I have always wanted to do or accomplish is...

Luckily that already happened: I am following my true passion.

When I’m not teaching I like to...

Spend time with my amazing twins and husband. We love to travel far and close, go camping, explore museums, taste new foods, and attend scientific conferences together. I feel extremely fortunate that my kids are able to grow up in a truly multicultural and diverse environment.

My biggest fear is...

That my children will not be able to grow up as carefree as I did.

If I could have dinner with anyone, it would be...

Truly, my family!

Photo: provided by Alicia Meuret