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Alex Suptela, '16, Recognized for Instructional Skills in Graduate School



Gardner-Webb alumnus, Alex Suptela, left front, helps a student in the lab at UNC-Charlotte. Suptela has received two awards for teaching excellence since becoming a student in the doctoral program at the school.

Alex Suptela, '16, chose to study biology and psychology at Gardner-Webb University, because both subjects fascinated him. He enjoyed research, but hadn't thought about teaching. Then, he became a teaching assistant for Dr. Meredith Rowe and the Department of Natural Sciences. One day after helping her with a lab, he mentioned that teaching the lab seemed like fun. She asked him if he wanted to try it. "I thought about it and said, 'yes,' and from there it just became this passion of mine," Suptela reflected. "I had never really thought about teaching at any point in time prior to that."

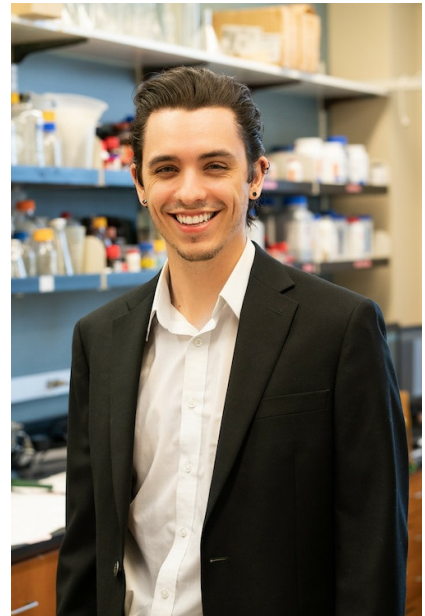
A native of Gastonia, N.C., Suptela is a doctoral student in molecular biology at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte, N.C. He's doing research in the field of immunology in the central nervous system, focusing on the brain. He's also been recognized for his teaching skills. "Since starting graduate school in the fall of 2017, I've been awarded the departmental award for teaching excellence two years in a row over

about 60 other graduate students and have been invited to give a couple lectures throughout the department,” Suptela shared. “I’ve fallen in love with teaching, and I’m definitely considering it as a profession.”

In addition to his academic pursuits, Suptela is president of the Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG), vice president for the Biology Department Student Government, and represents all the graduate students, about 5,000, with a seat on the Graduate Council that includes members of the Graduate School Administration.

Suptela was drawn to Gardner-Webb because of the beautiful campus and the community and closeness he felt among the students. “Once I started at GWU, the professors were really the best part to me,” he affirmed. “I absolutely loved every single professor I ever had in both the biology and psychology departments. They were all absolutely fantastic.”

He also discovered that he was well-prepared to work in the Marriott Lab at UNC-Charlotte. “The labs that I took at Gardner-Webb, especially the genetics and biochemistry labs, helped me understand some of the techniques that I never knew I would actually need until I got to graduate school,” Suptela assessed. “The classes themselves helped immensely as well. In fact, the book we used for Dr. (David) Judge’s biochemistry course was the same book I used for one of my 8000 level courses here at UNC-Charlotte.”



Moreover, his GWU professors were approachable and encouraging. “I was never turned down when I needed extra help,” Suptela asserted. “They were more than happy to talk to me about opportunities for after graduation. I attribute the majority of my success and love for teaching to the opportunities Dr. Rowe and Stacie Smith (GWU instructor of biology) gave me as an undergrad at GWU, and I couldn’t be more thankful for it.”

[Learn more about the GWU Department of Natural Sciences.](#)