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Grace Love's Undergraduate Research Prepared Her for Virtual Opportunity



BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University senior Grace Love is completing a sixth-month internship with the U.S. Embassy in Mali without leaving her home in Shelby, N.C. Through the Virtual Student Federal Service (VSFS) internship program coordinated by the U.S. Department of State, she is working with an assistant general service officer.

Receiving instructions by email and phone, Love has updated a welcome book for families of embassy personnel and reformatted another book for the Marines and USAID (United States Agency for International Development) personnel who are currently in Mali.

The internship gives her a glimpse into a career in foreign service. “There is a regional conflict going on in Mali,” Love explained. “Because climate change has made the area uninhabitable, the people who live in the Sahara region are moving closer to resources, but the government has never acknowledged these people. The conflict has been going on for seven years, but it’s getting worse. It’s going to have to be something that an international organization steps in and helps with. ”

A global studies major and French minor, Love chose the field because it combines all of her passions: politics, traveling and helping other people. She came to GWU to major in nursing, but struggled her freshman year. On a trip to Paris with the Honors Student

Association, Love discussed her dilemma with Dr. Tom Jones, biology professor and associate dean of the Honors Program. He advised her to find a career that she would enjoy.

After much research, she discovered foreign service and began looking for internship opportunities. Her adviser, Dr. Casey Delehanty, assistant professor of global studies, found the VSFS website. She applied over the summer while she was studying French at the University of Quebec at Trois-Rivieres.

She feels the research she conducted through the GWU Undergraduate Research Program helped her obtain the internship. “Since I am assisting a foreign service officer in Bamako, Mali, with data collection, my previous research proved that I possess the skills necessary for this internship,” Love assessed.



Mali (in red) is large country in Africa.

Love’s research project focused on the perceived differences in the qualifications of women candidates versus male candidates in the United Kingdom House of Commons. She studied data from the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts, which provided information on a candidate’s education, previous parliament work and incumbency. She also analyzed vote share percentages from BBC (British Broadcasting Corp.) and information from other sources.

“I produced results that indicate that women candidates had a slight advantage over their male counterparts in the 2017 House of Commons election,” Love stated. “My research has made me more aware of the challenges women in politics face and the various ways women candidates overcome those challenges. As a female pursuing a career in international relations, this research has helped to prepare me for how to overcome stereotypes, as well as how to incorporate more women into the political realm.”

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

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.