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Office of University
Communications

May 12, 2019

Bethany Leap Will Continue Her Studies at American University in Washington, D.C.



BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—A Gardner-Webb University graduating senior has been awarded a full scholarship and research funding to continue her studies in justice, law and criminology. Bethany Leap, of Sarasota, Fla., has been accepted into the doctoral program at American University in Washington, D.C.

Leap received a Bachelor of Science in Global Studies with a focus on regional studies and a minor in political science on May 11, 2019. She plans to research terrorism, political violence and radicalization of extremist groups, specifically focusing on the use of social media platforms in the radicalization process.

“I always wanted to join the fight against terrorism in some way, but I was unaware how I could best contribute until I was exposed to the impacts of academic research on the topic,” Leap observed. “The interdisciplinary nature of the doctoral program at American is unique as it offers me the flexibility to further my passion for both counterterrorism research and conflict studies on a broader scale. Finally, being in close proximity to the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, and the State Department opens up the prospect of cultivating professional relationships with government researchers and policymakers, potentially allowing my future research to have major policy implications.”

While at GWU, Leap received a grant for focused research through the Undergraduate Research Scholars program. She chose to study the effects of long-term indiscriminate violence by rebel forces on the outcomes of civil wars. Her mentor was Dr. Casey Delehanty, assistant professor of global studies. She presented the research, “Ticking Time Bombs: The Effects of Indiscriminate Violence on Civil War Outcomes” at the Alpha Chi Honor Society’s National Convention and won a Region III graduate fellowship and was first alternate for the national Benedict graduate fellowship. She also presented her findings at the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) National Conference in Chicago, Ill.

“This would not have been possible without the care of the amazing faculty or the incredible research opportunities provided at Gardner-Webb,” Leap praised. “As a recipient of the Summer Scholars Undergraduate Research fellowship, I was able to devote nearly 200 hours to strictly researching my interests. The experience provided by Gardner-Webb’s focus on undergraduate research not only confirmed that I could conduct meaningful research in the social sciences, but it also gave me the confidence to apply to research-heavy doctoral programs. The rigorous curriculum required by the Department of Social Sciences honed my skills in writing and critical analysis, and the multidisciplinary design of the Global Studies program granted me the freedom to take classes outside the major that were necessary in making me a competitive candidate for fully-funded graduate programs.”

Leap added that her professors, specifically Delehanty, Dr. Elizabeth Amato, Dr. June Hobbs, and Dr. Joseph Moore, helped her connect with researchers for internships, receive nominations for prestigious academic fellowships and scholarships, and obtain personalized recommendation letters for graduate school applications. “The small-knit community feel of Gardner-Webb allowed me the environment to invest in meaningful relationships with my professors, and these professors were able to teach me the specific skillset needed for my career aspirations,” Leap affirmed. “More importantly, they helped shape me into the person I am today.”

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.