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### **GWU Physician Assistant Alumna Provides Medical Care in Underserved Community**

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# GWU Physician Assistant Alumna Provides Medical Care in Underserved Community

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Office of University  
Communications

March 6, 2019

## Sarah McManus '17 Joins Her Father's Practice in Rural Burke County, N.C.



The Gardner-Webb University Physician Assistant (PA) Studies program launched in 2014 with a mission to provide care to medically underserved people. Sarah McManus, a member of the program's second graduating class in 2017, is fulfilling that goal. She works

with her father in a rural family practice in Morganton, N.C.

“It is an interesting dynamic having my Dad as my supervising physician, but we work well together,” McManus offered. “Our office is about 10 miles outside of town, and we see patients from many surrounding counties. I see a wide variety of ages and complaints, everything from newborn exams to diabetes to musculoskeletal complaints to women’s health and beyond. Because of our rural location, we are often used as a sort of urgent care and will have patients who need stitches, or construction workers who have nails shot through their fingers. We often see agricultural-related injuries, as well, including the occasional rooster bite.”

As an undergrad, McManus started out in animal science with plans to become a veterinarian. After spending a year studying animals, she realized her true calling was to work with people. She changed her major to biological sciences with a concentration in human biology.

When she started looking for graduate schools, she applied to Gardner-Webb’s PA program and was invited for an interview. She liked the University for several reasons, including its Christian foundation, small class sizes and supportive faculty and staff. “The professors truly care about you, your wellbeing and your future,” she assessed. “They will challenge you beyond what you thought possible, because they know what you are capable of doing. They will be there for you when you are struggling and will also celebrate your accomplishments with you.”

The classes—from systematic medical modules and professional development to documentation and guest lectures on ethics and medical malpractice—taught her how to develop a diagnosis and plan for a particular patient. “We also learned how to write, say and teach the plan and advocate for the patient,” she related. “My education taught me how much teamwork truly goes into the care of each individual patient. If there is a question I cannot answer, I have the option of consulting my supervising physician, pharmacists, radiologists, nurses, physical therapists and other specialists to find an answer.”

Another highlight of her time at GWU was being chosen to spend six weeks in Zambia, Africa, working in a small mission hospital. “It was one of the best and most challenging experiences of my life and further ingrained in me a passion to bring medical aid to those who need it most,” McManus asserted, adding that she’d like to do short-term medical mission trips in the future.

Because of her experiences, McManus helps mentor current GWU students as a preceptor for the program. “I feel that one of the responsibilities of a medical provider is to help teach and mentor new providers,” she affirmed. “Precepting students has given me even more

passion for medicine and challenges me to continue learning every day. Being able to do this for students from my own alma mater gives me a greater appreciation for those who mentored me. I will forever be grateful for all of them.”