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Communications

January 4, 2019

Hannah Roberts '19, of Summerfield, N.C., Develops First Section of Science Fiction Novel

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—A Gardner-Webb University senior English major spent part of her summer studying the themes of colonialism, environmentalism and ethnocentrism in science fiction. From what she learned, Hannah Roberts wrote the first arc of her own science fiction novel. “An arc is an episodic section of a certain theme, plot or character experience,” Roberts explained. “Science fiction is a wonderful genre for including diversity and exploring controversial topics. I had never written sci-fi, so I wanted to try something new.”

She was one of 13 GWU students who conducted research during the 2018 summer terms with a grant from the Undergraduate Research Scholars Program. She worked 40 hours a week for five weeks on her project and is required to present it in a professional forum. The faculty mentor who worked with her was Dr. Chris Davis, professor of English.

A native of Summerfield, N.C., Roberts said the experience will help her as she seeks a job on a writing team for either a story-based podcast or video game. “This was the best and most important thing I have ever done at Gardner-Webb,” Roberts shared. “It isn’t easy, and you have to be willing to work hard, but it is so, so worth it. It was super helpful to be able to work on a project that I will be able to use to showcase my abilities, creativity, and commitment.”

To begin her project, Roberts read sci-fi novels by indigenous authors or sci-fi novels that featured diverse characters. These books included “Midnight Robber” by Nalo Hopkinson, “Flight” by Vanna Bonta, “So Long Been Dreaming” by Nalo Hopkinson and Uppinder Mehan, “Walking the Clouds” by Gray Rinehart, and “Killer of Enemies” by Joseph Bruchac.

“I learned not only how a history of colonization affects modern narrative, but also how indigenous authors subvert the idea of victimization to empower themselves, their characters, and their culture,” Roberts observed. “I found a lot of books that are now some

of my favorites, and I ended up spending a lot of time exploring realistic alternatives to carbon-based life forms, which was fun.”

She also created some watercolor paintings to illustrate her book and will present her work at the GWU Life of the Scholar Multidisciplinary Conference in the spring. The main idea in the story arc she completed was exploration. “A crew from an interplanetary cargo ship make an emergency landing on a nearby planet, which is home to a sentient alien species, and the humans have to figure out how to coexist, communicate, and work with these creatures in order to get off the planet,” Roberts described. “The next arcs will deal with humankind’s appropriation and conquest of the planet and her resources, the culling of the alien species, and then one creature’s desperate efforts to reclaim its heritage and the remainder of the mother planet.”

If you are interested in learning more about the programs offered by the Department of English Language and Literature, [click here](#).

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university that prepares students to become critical thinkers, effective leaders and compassionate servants in the global community. Emphasizing a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics, Gardner-Webb is a place where Christian conviction meets intellectual freedom. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.