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Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications and Moore, Mallory, "GWU Music Major Spends Semester in Washington, D.C." (2017). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 539.

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Office of University
Communications

October 30, 2017

Chris Coffey ('17) Works with One of the Top Organizations in the Music Industry

By Mallory Moore '18, Intern for Communications

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Many Gardner-Webb University students choose to spend a semester strengthening their professional skills with an off-campus internship. Chris Coffey, a senior from Morganton, N.C., is spending his last semester working with one of the top music businesses in the country.

Chris Coffey

As an intern at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., Coffey works directly with professional musicians, making vital connections for his future career. “There are wild things happening every day at the Kennedy Center, so I always experience something new and wonderful,” he stated. Coffey is a music major with an emphasis on music business and industry and plans to graduate in December.

Coffey works specifically with the Kennedy Center’s education department and their In-School Ensembles Program, which sends out members of the National Symphony Orchestra to local schools to perform for free. Coffey schedules performances and keeps both the musicians and schools on track. He also works with several other programs including the Young People’s Concert series and the Youth Fellowship program. Coffey is thankful for the opportunity to do meaningful work and gain real-world business experience. “I am constantly learning about arts administration and the practices of a successful arts organization,” he shared. “I cannot praise the staff here enough. Everyone has been kind, helpful, and willing to share their immense knowledge of the industry.”

While Coffey was already familiar with the Kennedy Center, his GWU music professors helped him find, apply, and prepare for the internship. He is especially thankful to Dr. Patricia Sparti, professor of music, and Jondra Harmon, instructor of music, for helping him with the application process and recommending him at the Kennedy Center. Coffey also added that his classes with Dr. Bruce Moser, assistant professor of music, helped him prepare his application and writing sample. Coffey noted, “I can honestly say that every professor in the music department has made some impact on my life, whether they know it or not.”

As a student, Coffey has been very active in the music department, playing horn and mellophone in the orchestra, the Marching Bulldogs, Symphonic Band, and Broad River Brass. Gardner-Webb offers a Community School of Music and often collaborates with local musicians and groups, allowing Coffey to experience the arts in the context of a community. "I think this first-hand experience as a student will be invaluable as I create my own programs," he commented. He appreciates the community-driven atmosphere at Gardner-Webb, which greatly influenced his decision to attend the University.

After graduation, Coffey would like to apply for a job in the arts business that will allow him to bring music to a community. He sees himself eventually moving up to a leadership position and starting his own arts program in a small-town setting. His experiences at both Gardner-Webb and the Kennedy Center will help him to achieve these goals and make an impact in the music industry.

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 ignites learning and service opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.