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Office of University
Communications

May 12, 2017

Graduates Honored in Three Commencement Ceremonies

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. — Gardner-Webb University is pleased to announce over 600 students recently received degrees during spring commencement exercises held May 12-13. Students earned associates, bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees from a variety of university programs.

Yecenia Ponce of Forest City, N.C., graduates Saturday at 3 p.m. with degrees in criminal justice and human services. She entered the Degree Completion Program in 2014 because she wanted to serve and be a reliable resource for her community. Currently a data entry specialist at Productive Inc. in Kings Mountain, N.C., Ponce completed her internship with Rutherford County (N.C.) Telecommunications Center.

My favorite GWU memory ... would be my senior pinning, because it was awesome for my four children to see me accomplish an important milestone in my life.

Adam Moore of Gaffney, S.C., is a staff nurse in the Cardiovascular Recover Unit (CVRU) at Spartanburg (S.C.) Medical Center. He graduates Saturday at 3 p.m. with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing and also earned his Associate Degree in Nursing from GWU. He chose GWU because it's his hometown school. A native of Boiling Springs, he graduated from Crest High School in 1999.

My favorite GWU memory is ... graduating in 2013 with my ADN and my late dad being there.

After her graduation on Friday at 7 p.m. with a Master of Physician Assistant Studies, **Wendy Riley of Waxhaw, N.C.** won't get a break from studying. She and the other graduates from the Physician Assistant (PA) Studies Program will be diligently preparing for the PANCE, the PA exam they must pass in order to practice medicine. She takes the exam May 26, and her hope is to work in family medicine in Waxhaw or the Charlotte, N.C., area.

I love GWU because ... of its Christ-centered focus and the beautiful campus.

Cedric Starr of Shelby, N.C., receives a Master of Divinity in pastoral studies Friday at 7 p.m. During his last semester in the GWU School of Divinity, Starr interned at Boiling Springs (N.C.)

Baptist, the church he's been attending since he came to GWU as an undergrad. He completed a racial reconciliation project to connect the mostly Caucasian members of Boiling Springs Baptist with members of Green Bethel Church, who are predominantly African-American. This summer, he has an internship with Pole Line Road Baptist, a multicultural church in Davis, Calif. "I am going to California to be challenged; to grow as a minister of Christ, spiritually, mentally, and socially; and to learn and develop new skills, as well as shape and hone skills I already possess," Starr assessed.

I love GWU because ... of the love and encouragement I have received from the staff. Dr. Paula Qualls, Dr. Perry Hildreth, Dr. Don Berry, Dr. Jim McConnell, and Dr. Cal Roberson have helped me come to a better understanding of my purpose in God's plan for the building of His kingdom.

Verhonda Crawford of Chesnee, S.C., receives her Master of Business Administration. She was elected to the Chesnee City Council before she received her undergraduate degree in 2012

from Gardner-Webb. Crawford continues to serve on the council and represent her town by serving on economic development committees for the state of South Carolina. She's also opened a small business and mentors young people through the Miss US International pageant and other volunteer positions.

My favorite GWU memory is ... cheering at the Georgia Tech game as an undergrad student. The Bulldogs lost by three points, but after the game the players came to the sidelines and thanked the fans and the cheerleaders for their support. The moment was so special, it was like we won anyway. As a graduate student, my most memorable experience was sitting in Dr. Earl Godfrey's accounting class. He encouraged me to start my own business and take a leap of faith. He showed me how it was financially possible and how to apply the principles I was learning in his classroom to my everyday life.

Christopher Lile of Waynesville, N.C., an Undergraduate Research Summer Scholar and a double major in biology and psychology, will be taking a year to further explore the fields of

ecology and wildlife research. This summer, he will serve as an intern at a wolf conservation center. In October, he travels to Madagascar, Africa, to work for three months as a volunteer field researcher for a lemur-monitoring project. While in Madagascar, he plans to apply to Ph.D. programs in physical anthropology and evolutionary primatology.

He is grateful for the opportunities he has been afforded as a Gardner-Webb student. "I love Gardner-Webb because you can easily involve yourself in a range of communities if you make the effort," he reflected. "My research project mentor, Dr. Joseph Oyugi

[associate professor of biology], actually came to me and asked me if I wanted to do it. The professors here really work hard to get students involved. The student-teacher relationship is amazing at Gardner-Webb. You just don't get that at every college."

My favorite GWU memory is ... exploring the running trails of Boiling Springs and going swimming in Broad River after track workouts.

Chris Beguhl of Rolesville, N.C., an Undergraduate Research Summer Scholar, receives a Bachelor of Arts in History and will pursue doctoral studies in the field of gender history this fall at the University of Arizona. Studying history wasn't a significant interest of Beguhl's until a high school teacher unveiled its purpose is to understand humanity. Professors at Gardner-Webb University have been inspirational mentors who helped Beguhl further explore historical connections and develop research skills.

"My social science professors have challenged me to become a better learner, writer, and reader in their vigorous classes," Beguhl observed. "They pushed me in the right way and direction to help me better achieve my potential."

I love GWU because ... of the diversity of Christian communities here that allowed me to find a good, supportive group of friends.

Starr Tate of Gastonia, N.C., an Undergraduate Research Summer Scholar, earns a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. She plans to work as a post-op Registered Nurse (RN) at Carolinas Healthcare System Cleveland and will eventually pursue a Ph.D. in Nursing Practice.

Her advice to those arriving on campus after she graduates is to acknowledge the importance of being intentional. "To be honest, the college experience is really what you make out of it," she explained. "It's just a matter of looking for it and not being afraid to sometimes put yourself out of your comfort zone. There's so much to get involved in. At Gardner-Webb, you can find a way to serve in the areas where you are most passionate."

My favorite GWU memory is ... having movie nights in HAPY residence hall with my friends.

The University salutes these students and congratulates them for their significant achievements in higher education.

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.