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Office of University
Communications

March 29, 2017

Andrea Thomas '14 Pursues Degrees in Theology and Mental Health Counseling

The most beneficial course Andrea Thomas '14 took at Gardner-Webb University was Honors Research and Thesis. Her project examined how sacred stories from Islam, Judaism and Christianity could be beneficial to the coping process for rape survivors of each respective tradition. "I loved being able to immerse myself in my project and create a paper from my own ideas," she reflected. "It gave me the opportunity to engage seriously in a topic I was interested in, as well as learn how to properly research and write, which prepared me for graduate school."

Andrea Thomas

A native of Shelby, N.C., Thomas moved to Boston, Mass., after graduating from Gardner-Webb. She is enrolled in a dual Master's program at Boston College, pursuing a Master of Arts in theology and ministry and mental health counseling. Her goal is to work in ministry, helping the church community engage society through advocacy and education. "At GWU, I took a Psychology of Religion course my sophomore year with Dr. James Morgan, and it changed the way I think about the world and sparked my interest in pursuing theology and psychology," Thomas explained. "It was fascinating to learn the many ways religion and spirituality can be positive sources of hope and empowerment in people's lives, and I want to encourage that in the people I will be working with one day."

Additionally, other courses in her major provided her with an in-depth and diverse understanding of the human person, and in the general education classes, she learned essential life skills. "The faculty were outstanding at integrating many other disciplines into my psychological education, so I received a very well-rounded experience," Thomas observed. "Because of GWU's extensive liberal arts core requirements, I was prepared to truly engage in critical thinking and be able to tackle problems from many perspectives. My liberal arts education affects my everyday life in conversations with other people and engaging in the political process."

The learning environment was enhanced by the close-knit, Christian community. "There is nothing greater than the relationships I made at GWU and the opportunities those relationships have afforded me," Thomas

Andrea Thomas and her finance, Carson Shoupe

Andrea Thomas and her finance, Carson Shoupe, who is also a GWU alum

asserted. “My relationships with the faculty and staff encouraged me to pursue post-graduate education and inspired me to tackle real-world issues. I made lasting friendships there, and I am proud every day of my fellow alumni who are doing amazing things with their lives.”

She continued, “I really enjoyed being a part of campus ministries and the larger Christian community in Boiling Springs and Shelby, N.C. Gardner-Webb was the place where I discovered who I am and who I want to be, and the place where I met my future husband, and I couldn’t imagine my life without any of those things. I owe GWU a debt of gratitude.”