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Communications

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Juliette Ratchford ('16) Pursuing Doctorate in Psychological Sciences

As a student at Gardner-Webb University, Juliette Ratchford ('16) explored various topics that developed her critical-thinking skills and prepared her for the next step in her educational journey. Originally from Demorest, Ga., Ratchford is pursuing a doctorate in psychological sciences at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif.

“My experience at GWU has allowed me to understand and practice the integration of psychology and faith here at Fuller,” Ratchford stated. “My experiences with the professors in the psychology department at GWU has prepared me for the in-depth research that I am now involved in. They constantly challenged me to do better and be better, which has helped me immensely.”

At Fuller, Ratchford works in the Thrive Lab, which focuses its work on understanding the dynamics of emerging adult identity formation in the context of faith communities. “I am enjoying Fuller and the resources it has provided me to expound upon my education,” Ratchford affirmed. “My research is focused on thriving and looking into the way this is connected to a transcendent narrative which, in many cases, is God. This is the topic my lab is focused on as well. Specifically, I am examining the way our concept of God influences our experience of sexuality.”

While she feels confident in her scholarly pursuits, she believes her studies at GWU also prepared her for success beyond the classroom. “Anything I learned—the study of personality, counseling techniques, and crisis intervention—is applicable to my life outside of class,” she concluded. “I believe the School of Psychology and Counseling is more focused on shaping well-rounded, intelligent individuals than it is on checking the boxes for a degree. I left the program knowledgeable about more than just psychology. I understand how to defend my stance, listen to the perspectives of others, and acknowledge when I am in the wrong. I have skills that will continue to serve me through my entire life.”

Juliette Ratchford in the classroom

At Gardner-Webb, whether she was learning theology in Greek class or participating in campus activities, Ratchford felt like she was a valued member of the community. “People—professors and students—genuinely care for each other, and it was great to be a part of that,” Ratchford advised. “Immerse yourself in the community. Get involved with clubs, seek out other people, and do not be afraid to explore. Your time at Gardner-Webb will stretch you and grow you in ways you’ve never imagined.”