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Gardner-Webb Student to Serve as Primate Field Researcher in Madagascar, Africa

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Office of University
Communications

December 16, 2016

Christopher Lile ('17) to Monitor Endangered Lemurs Beginning in October 2017

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – A Gardner-Webb senior received some exciting news just in time for the Christmas holiday. Christopher Lile, a biology and psychology double major from Waynesville, N.C., recently applied to participate in the Omaha Zoo's Department of Conservation Genetics lemur monitoring project in Madagascar, Africa. On Dec. 14, he was offered a position on their research team for the October – December cohort.

"In 10 months, I will be living in a tent in Madagascar and spending my days collecting data on critically-endangered lemur species," Lile expressed. "I am absolutely ecstatic!"

Lile spent a portion of his summer doing research on small mammal populations near Boiling Springs, N.C., and he knew the hands-on field experience would provide a solid foundation for his ultimate goal of working with primates. "The research I've done at Gardner-Webb was incredibly helpful as I applied for the Madagascar project," he offered. "I already have a basis of field experience and know some of the terminology and methods that would be used in that environment."

Although grad school is on the horizon, Lile is not in a hurry. "Right now, my main interest is in primates," he shared. "After guidance from professors, I am planning to apply to Duke University for their Ph.D. program in physical anthropology or evolutionary primatology and to the New York Consortium in Evolutionary Primatology's graduate training program." [The Consortium involves scientists from New York University, The City University of New York, Columbia University, the American Museum of Natural History, and Wildlife Conservation International.]

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."

To hear the full WGWG.org interview with Christopher Lile, click below:

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University's purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).