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Office of University
Communications

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Kristy Young Johnson ('92) Switched Majors After Discovering Interest in Science

Kristy Young Johnson ('92) took a course in her first semester at Gardner-Webb that prevented her from making the wrong decision about her future. "I hadn't really considered a career in science before I got to GWU," Johnson shared. "I was enrolled in biology with Dr. Tom Jones. His class was a wonderful introduction, touching on so many different aspects of biology that I finished the semester wanting to know more. Every science class I took just added to my curiosity."

Johnson switched her major to chemistry, and GWU professors urged her to pursue her doctorate. "When I started graduate school, I remember being so thankful for all of my undergraduate classes," she reflected. "My first biochemistry class started with a lot of the same material we had covered at GWU, and I frequently found myself referring back to my undergraduate notes and textbooks."

Johnson began teaching in 2000 as an adjunct professor at The Citadel in Charleston, S.C. She joined the faculty in 2002 and is an associate professor in the biology department. She gives students the same support and encouragement she received at Gardner-Webb, even creating and seeking approval for a bioterrorism course because of student interest after anthrax attacks in 2001. No textbook was available, so she used a variety of reference books.

"As the class gained popularity, I started to think about writing a textbook tailored to the course," she related. "My colleague, Dr. Paul Nolan, generated a test bank, and I started outlining chapters." The book, "Biological Weapons: Recognizing, Understanding and Responding to the Threat," was recently published by John Wiley & Sons. "The whole process from idea to publication took about five years, so seeing it in print was wonderful," Johnson revealed. "I'm excited about teaching bioterrorism with students actually using the book designed for the course."