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Gardner-Webb Alum Prepared for Medical School and Ministry

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Office of University
Communications

September 5, 2016

Caitlin Silver Porter ('14) Studying Holistic Approach to Medical Care

Caitlin Silver Porter ('14) majored in biology at Gardner-Webb University as a stepping stone to medical school. She minored in mission studies, because of her heart for ministry. A course that explored issues in science and religion helped to connect her two interests.

“Because I split my time between Withrow (science building) and Lindsay (religious studies), I was sort of a college anomaly,” she observed. “But this class showed me that these two disciplines can actually mesh very well and both can be a huge part of who I am.”

Another class that benefited her ministry was American Sign Language (ASL). “After the first week of class I fell in love with the language and the culture surrounding it,” she affirmed. “I took a mission trip to Africa in the midst of completing my ASL requirements and, because God is so cool, there was a group of deaf and hard-of-hearing people at the church where we were working. I was able to attend their services and get to know the hearts of these people and share with my team.”

All of her classes increased her knowledge and skills, but her professors also challenged her to evaluate her beliefs. “Apart from the great education and preparation, I attribute Gardner-Webb and its faculty and staff with growing me in my faith and solidifying a firm foundation in Christ,” Porter assessed. “I was challenged in my beliefs, encouraged in my calling, and united with some of my closest friends who continue to walk with me through life. My professors were—and some still are—my greatest mentors.”

While all of her professors took the time to get to know her and offer their help, Porter was influenced the most by Professor of Biology and Associate Dean of the University Honors Program, Dr. Tom Jones. “There were times I entered his office laughing, crying, stressed out, confused, angry, or just wanting to talk, and I never remember a time leaving without knowing he did everything he could to see me succeed,” Porter reflected. “Even today he continues to help me out with anything from recommendation letters to connecting me with someone he knows in any area of the world where I may find myself.”

She also grew in her faith by participating in the Gardner-Webb Christian community. “There is something about Gardner-Webb that makes you feel safe to proclaim Christ and to live out a life for him,” she asserted. “Gardner-Webb prepared me for what the world has

to say about my faith, and equipped me for defense. Worshiping with classmates at The Gathering (student-led worship service) was the most wonderful encouragement to get me through the week, and knowing that professors are praying over your tests, studying, and even day-to-day life is something that cannot be topped. My faith was shaped, strengthened, and rooted at Gardner-Webb, and I know that is why God called me to be a Bulldog in the first place.”

She experienced the support of the Christian community the summer before she graduated. Her grandfather died and the University’s pastoral care minister called her and came to the funeral. “I had emails from multiple members of the faculty and staff letting me know that I was in their prayers and they were available should I need anything,” she recalled. “There are not many universities that can offer a student this kind of love and support. There are not many universities that are blessed enough to have a team full of so many wonderful, God-fearing, God-loving, people-loving faculty and staff. And, there are not many students who get the opportunity to attend such a wonderful university. I am so glad I was one of the lucky ones.”

Porter is a student in the master’s program at Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine in Lillington, N.C. She chose Campbell because its Christian atmosphere is similar to Gardner-Webb. According to the school’s website, Doctors of Osteopathic (DO) medicine combine medical technology with their ears to listen to their patients, their eyes to see their patients as whole persons, and their hands to diagnose and treat injury and illness.

“Osteopathic medicine just made sense to me, especially with a focus on rural medicine and medical missions,” Porter shared. “Gardner-Webb strengthened my love for people, especially those in small towns both in North Carolina and around the world, and osteopathic medicine will allow me to serve God in the role he prepared for me while I was a student at Gardner-Webb.”