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Tyler Turner ('16) Combines his Interests to Help Solve Biological Problems

Studying computer science can be frustrating, but with the help of his professors at Gardner-Webb University, Tyler Turner ('16) learned to make the most of errors.

"Computer science is a path that is paved with mistakes and failures, but it is within those mistakes that we learn the most and when we reach the end, become competent and talented coders," Turner reflected. "Dr. Mirek Mystkowski (professor of mathematics and computer science) is always kind with pointing out errors and using them as valuable lessons, which taught me more than anything ever could."

Turner, who also has a degree in biology, is in the Ph.D. program in bioinformatics at UNC-Charlotte. As a doctoral candidate, he will help develop and utilize computational approaches for solving biological problems.

"My interest in the field comes from trying to find areas that combine my two main passions, biology and computer science," Turner explained. "The applications that are covered by bioinformatics are far reaching, ranging from genetic research to pharmaceutical development. Other applications include the study of viruses and bacteria, the rendering of protein structures and energy output of protein folding for comparative analysis."

Turner feels ready for the rigors of graduate school, because of the support he's received from professors and other students. "All of my computer classes have been memorable as each one brought new challenges and struggles that my fellow classmates and I would face together," he assessed. "Dr. Mystkowski is always willing to help work through the coding process and error correction to make sure that I understand exactly what I did wrong and a better alternative to use in the future."

He believes that Gardner-Webb's smaller class sizes give professors more time to spend helping each student. "At a larger school, a computer science course may only consist of going over the errors with a teacher who is unable to devote the time and care needed to show the students how to learn from these mistakes," Turner observed. "My classes have given me the knowledge necessary to begin my Ph.D. in bioinformatics, and the discipline

to perform at that level. My course work has been constant and increasingly challenging, which is an essential first step into doing well at the graduate level. I would have never gotten to where I am today if it weren't for all of my professors pushing me and supporting me every step of the way."