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Office of University
Communications

April 18, 2016

Zachary Smith ('15) Finds Success in Human Relations Field

When it came time to choose a major, Zachary Smith ('15) prayed about his decision, and the answer came while he was sitting in Gardner-Webb's Hamrick Hall, home of the Godbold School of Business.

"I looked up at the bulletin board and noticed the healthcare management information," recalled Smith, a Human Resources Specialist at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C. "When I went to contact the professor to set up a meeting, I noticed the email only had one letter different than mine."

Smith continued to pray, and after learning more about the degree from Dr. Denise Smith, former associate professor of healthcare management, his major was decided. One of his first classes introduced him to the human resources profession, and he decided to take another class on the subject. He could see himself working in the human resources field, and his courses were designed to allow him to explore the topic.

"Within my healthcare classes, I was given the opportunity to write about my interests and complete projects regarding my aspirations, so my classes were always relevant to my career goals," Smith related. "I found the healthcare law class was very helpful to prepare me for the standards in a true professional setting. A few of the topics that are pertinent from my studies in college are HIPPA, legal hiring processes, and how to conduct an interview. Gardner-Webb offered me a wonderful place to study and grow into the professional I am today."

Material covered in his course on Diversity in Healthcare has been particularly useful to his job. "It was eye-opening to see how other cultures treat patients compared to Western medicine," Smith assessed. "Working at Duke, we see patients from all across the globe, and I believe that class gave me a better understanding of the conditions some patients come from and their perspective on the healthcare industry."

Just as important as the topics he learned in class are the relationships he forged with friends and professors. His professors offered guidance and support throughout his college experience and as he began his job search. Because of his professors' interest in his

success, Smith feels comfortable asking for their opinions. “If I were faced with an issue in the workforce, I would be able to seek professional advice,” he shared.

Realizing when to ask for help—and knowing that it’s okay—was one of the first lessons he learned at Gardner-Webb. “Human Biology was a general education requirement, but it definitely tested me,” he revealed. “I benefited most from this class, because of the hard work and commitment it took to succeed. The struggle at first taught me the benefit of perseverance, dedication, and humility. I utilized Peer Tutoring and I never quit. It takes really looking at yourself to decide that sometimes you need to ask for help and commit yourself to putting 100 percent into attaining a goal. This class gave me more than knowledge of the human body, it gave me life lessons that I would use in the future.”