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### **GWU Alumnus Teaches Spanish Language and Culture**

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# GWU Alumnus Teaches Spanish Language and Culture

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## *Dylan Beaver ('15) Follows Example set by Gardner-Webb Professors*

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While Dylan Anthony Beaver ('15) of Polkville, N.C., traveled less than 30 minutes to attend Gardner-Webb University, his education included the opportunity to journey more than 4,000 miles to Spain, where he lived for three months.

“My study-abroad experience in Spain was truly life changing,” Beaver reflected. “It was the first time I had been that far from home for that length of time. After a couple of weeks of getting used to hearing and speaking Spanish 24/7, I got settled into classes and meeting new people and the dialogue became much easier and routine. Being there allowed me to immerse myself in the language and culture while building some great relationships along the way.”

After graduating, Beaver was hired to teach Spanish at Burns Middle School in Lawndale, N.C. “It’s honestly surreal to be teaching at the very middle school that I attended,” he observed. “Many of the faculty and staff that I remember are still here, which makes for easier transitioning.”

He believes his time in Spain helps him give his students a truer picture of life in the country. Beaver teaches approximately 80 sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders each semester. “I have learned a lot, namely how to relate to middle school students,” Beaver affirmed. “I believe that I have found ways to make learning a valuable experience for my students. The best part of my job is being able to see a concept click in the mind of a student. It is so rewarding to actually experience the moment that someone understands something that you taught him or her.”

One of the ways he likes to engage students is by allowing them to get into groups and perform speaking activities for their classmates. “This allows students to feel important, because they get to be in front of the class,” he explained. “This also helps other students to understand things better by having someone other than me leading the class.”

His role models are the faculty in the Department of World Languages, Literatures and Cultures. “Dr. Charles Moore, Dr. Ben Coates, and Dr. Teresa Phillips were instrumental in providing me with the knowledge that I have of the Spanish language and culture,” he affirmed. “I believe that it was their passion for the subject that I found most memorable,

and I hope that I can exhibit the same level of passion as a teacher. I learned a lot about how to facilitate critical thinking and make learning interesting for students simply by observing the enthusiasm of my professors.”

He also appreciates and applies the lessons he learned from his psychology professors, Dr. Iva Naydenova and Dr. James Morgan. “They taught me the importance of faith and altruism as keys to a healthy and successful life, especially through the readings in Dr. Morgan’s Positive Psychology class,” he elaborated.

The University’s Christian atmosphere was the main reason Beaver chose a school close to home, and receiving scholarships was a plus. He was also influenced by his high school Spanish teacher, a GWU alum, who inspired students with her zeal and knowledge of the country and the language.

He soon discovered that Gardner-Webb was 

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 a place where he could receive an exceptional education and become part of a community of people who strive to learn and grow in their faith and service to others.

“I am grateful for the friendships that I made at Gardner-Webb through my involvement in organizations, such as peer tutoring, marching band, Disc Golf Club and as president of Sigma Delta Pi (National Collegiate Hispanic Honor Society),” he related. “Also, being surrounded by so many people who share your faith was a great way for me to ensure that my faith stayed strong. With the availability of Bible studies, worship sessions and religious classes offered at Gardner-Webb, I found a way to grow as a Christian with other believers on campus.”