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Office of University
Communications

March 23, 2016

Scholars Present Broad Array of Academic Work at GWU, National Conferences

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University students showcased their original research in an array of academic disciplines during a pair of prestigious spring academic conferences.

Nearly 60 undergraduate and graduate students participated in the Life of the Scholar (LOTS) Multidisciplinary Conference on Gardner-Webb's campus in March, and 22 of those undergraduate scholars were delegates to the Alpha Chi 2016 National Convention in Washington, D.C., in April.

Life of the Scholar Multidisciplinary Conference
award winners and mentors

The Alpha Chi delegation was GWU's largest since beginning its honor society chapter in 1972, and several students earned significant prizes for their national presentations.

- Rebekah Rhea, of Knoxville, Tenn., received one of only 12 national Nolle Scholarships for her essay, "Not Quite Alive: A Discussion of Disability in Terms of Mortality."
- Madison Swift, of Concord, N.C., won a Region III scholarship for "Female Reproductive Health Challenges in Africa and the Middle East," which she also offered as a poster presentation.
- Kevin Mills, of Kings Mountain, N.C., received the Best Presentation Prize for Business Administration for his paper, "Creating an Alternative Meal Plan Using Cost Accounting Principles at Gardner-Webb University."
- Emily DeVries, of Mooresville, N.C., won the Anthropology/Sociology Best Presentation Prize for "Socially Conscious Coffee: An Examination of Fair Trade Programs in the Coffee Industry of Central America."

Students' research topics incorporated both personal and professional interests and experiences, and many presentations displayed studies across multiple liberal arts disciplines such as psychology, languages and sciences. Both conferences spotlighted several students whose projects were supported by Summer Undergraduate Research program funding. Taylor Schwartz, one of those scholars, spent five weeks last summer testing brain responses for evidence of social, performance and pain-related anxiety.

“It was an incredible opportunity to do primary research and develop my skills as an academic,” Schwartz exulted. “This experience provided me with tools to design and conduct an experiment and write about

Taylor Schwartz presents her research.

Summer Undergraduate Research Scholars also included Elisabeth Moore and Nathan Lile, and Undergraduate Research Grant Winners included Mariana Mellado and Merideth Byl. Gardner-Webb will expand its Undergraduate Research Scholars program to provide opportunities for additional students this summer.

In addition to the Alpha Chi awards, LOTS recognized elite scholarship through undergraduate presentation awards to Jeremiah Hamby, Christian Jessup, Mariana Mellado, Kevin Mills, Elisabeth Moore, Rebekah Rhea, Taylor Schwartz, Mary Toohey and Susan Ward. Karen Taylor was recognized for top graduate research, and the Alfred and Shirley Wampler Caudill Best Presentation prize was awarded to Wendy Harmon.

“What we are trying to do is bring a life of intellect to the Gardner-Webb campus,” Dr. June Hobbs, director of Undergraduate Research, Alpha Chi sponsor and GWU Professor of English, asserted following the LOTS conference. “These students are representative of all that is to be celebrated at Gardner-Webb.”

Since 1922, Alpha Chi has been “making scholarship effective for good.” The national college honor society inducts more than 12,000 members annually into 300 chapters located in almost every U.S. state and Puerto Rico. Membership is limited to the top 10 percent of an institution’s juniors, seniors and graduate students.

Since its inception in 1995 by Dr. Les Brown, professor emeritus of biology, the Life of the Scholar Multidisciplinary Conference has allowed students to share their research with the community, stimulate creative thinking and enhance their resumes with a professional conference credit.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University provides exceptional educational opportunities within a Christian environment, preparing students to think critically, to succeed professionally, and to serve faithfully as members of their local and global communities.