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Office of University
Communications

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Dr. Taylor Ferrier ('08) Establishing Medical Career After Building Professional Foundation at GWU

In the remote northern reaches of Canada's Ontario province, miles from the nearest service roads, Gardner-Webb University alumnus Dr. Taylor Ferrier has provided medical care. The residents in communities such as Moose Factory, Attawapiskat and Polar Bear Provincial Park are closer to the brilliant light shows of the aurora borealis than the comforts of a modern medical facility. But Ferrier has flown in to meet their health needs with the skills he has developed in his own life journey.

"It is here you are delivering care with everything you bring with you and your previous training," Ferrier reveals about his work with Aboriginal communities near the Arctic Circle. "You need to be smart, safe and know how to help those who can be treated, triage others who need to be on an airplane right away and corral entire communities to work together to stay safe. This type of care became much more exciting than being in a major center with all the best tools at your disposal. What you take away with you during these experiences is not the medicine but the people. How extraordinary these people are who live in such remote distances and have such beautiful traditions, stories to tell and seemingly impossible obstacles to overcome."

For Ferrier, his path through medical education and into a health career has been about helping people, a theme he also experienced during his undergraduate degree studies in biology and chemistry at Gardner-Webb. Originally from Stratford, Prince Edward Island, Canada, Ferrier came to GWU to play for the tennis team. He discovered an athletics program and coach who invested in his life, well beyond sports.

"(Coach) Mike Griffith not only made playing NCAA Division I tennis a dream come true, but he made certain that academic success was a primary goal, something that sets him apart from other coaches," Ferrier asserts. "He taught me how to be a professional, prepared, organized, on time and put your best foot forward, even in the most challenging and grueling times. These simple life lessons are those that many physicians struggle with, and it often makes their professional careers all the more demanding."

As well as the boost he received from his athletics experience at GWU, Ferrier felt incredible support from mentors in his science programs and across the entire campus.

“Gardner-Webb’s greatest asset is that it is replete with a group of professors and staff who are invested in their students, want to see them excel and go to great lengths to see it happen,” Ferrier shares. “A program, course or even project is only as successful as the student and professor who mutually embark upon success together. What made my particular Gardner-Webb experience successful were the professors in the science department who fostered my eagerness, demonstrated willingness and supported a platform for my interests and career goals. It was not the lessons taught in the classrooms, albeit important, but the discussions that flowed from them.”

After GWU, Ferrier followed the course of his science experiences into work with Dr. Richard Hawkins, an orthopedic surgeon known worldwide for his advancements in surgical approaches to human shoulders. During that time he prepared for graduate school and eventually chose Memorial University of Newfoundland back in Canada. He earned a Master of Science in Medicine there, with a focus in Clinical Epidemiology, a branch of medicine that deals with emerging diseases and health care systems. During that time his research and work earned multiple fellowships, scholarships and honors, “making instrumental changes in the healthcare system that today improves the availability of cancer diagnoses to physicians and patients.”

Ferrier then entered medical school at the University of Ottawa in Canada’s capital and earned his Doctorate in Medicine. “It was there I studied endless nights, continued clinical research and worked in the most remote places nationally and internationally, as far as Austria working in both Munk and local major hospitals,” Ferrier said.

Now in a post-graduate Family Medicine residency program with a focus on Emergency Medicine at the University of Toronto in Ontario, he wants to continue to develop his background and training to better serve people in semi-urban hospital and clinical settings, as well as global and rural communities with limited resources. “It would be a dream of mine to work out a connection for students interested in medicine at Gardner-Webb to join our team for a period of time, learn what it is like to practice medicine, meet patients and make a difference in people’s lives,” Ferrier offered. “For me, I had multiple mentors, teachers and friends at GWU who offered support and pushed me to have the courage both personally and professionally. GWU taught me some simple things I would tell anyone looking to learn and find their career that is right for them: find your passion, get a mentor and work hard.”