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Office of University
Communications

January 29, 2016

Christen MacKorell ('17) Receives Honors for Service, Leadership

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Christen MacKorell, class president of the Gardner-Webb University Physician Assistant (PA) Studies Class of 2017, is the first PA student ever to be accepted into the North Carolina Medical Society’s Leadership College through the Kanof Institute for Physician Leadership.

She has also spearheaded multiple Gardner-Webb PA Studies Program grants and outreach efforts to further leadership development of PA students as well as to provide medical care for underserved individuals in a homeless center in rural Western North Carolina. In recognition of her community service, advocacy role and leadership qualities, MacKorell has been invited to speak as a member of a panel discussion entitled “Developing and Engaging Student and Early Career PA Leaders” at the American Academy of Physician Assistants Leadership and Advocacy Summit Feb. 6 in Washington, DC.

Christen MacKorell works in a simulation lab in the Gardner-Webb University College of Health Sciences.

“I am very excited about the summit and look forward to representing my program and providing fellow PA students with a voice to the larger audience,” MacKorell reflected. “I am simply humbled to be learning and training amidst the leaders of my profession. As for my success, is it purely a reflection of my educators and a testament to their investment in me as a student and future clinician.”

The opportunity to serve patients — whether in a homeless shelter or a medical office — is her motivation for becoming a PA.

“I desired a healthcare position that would allow me to significantly contribute to the patient’s care through a diagnostic process in hopes of notably influencing patient outcomes while still having the flexibility to invest my time and skills in a manner that would meaningfully affect my local community and communities abroad,” she shared. “Frederick Buechner wrote in *Wishful Thinking*, ‘The place God calls you to is where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.’ Buechner’s words ring true for me, and I strongly believe that my passion to become a PA and serve my local community and communities abroad is the intersection where my joy and the world’s needs meet.”

MacKorell, who lives in Gaffney, S.C. with her husband and daughter, says the didactic year has been the most challenging of her academic career.

“Even so, I am amazed at the mental conditioning I have developed through the rigorous curriculum and I am encouraged through each lecture as we begin to assimilate the necessary knowledge to become competent providers,” she added.

The GWU program has met and exceeded her expectations with a faculty who graduated top of their class and have extensive clinical experience. In addition, they are advocates of their professions and have active roles in local and state medical societies.

“I originally chose GWU for its faculty-to-student ratios and its central location to surrounding cities,” MacKorell explained. “All of the faculty have open-door policies and are easily accessible through texts, calls, and emails. This has been critical to my success in the program. In a curriculum that moves so quickly, it is important to not get behind in the modules, and the faculty does an excellent job of making themselves available to students when they need additional assistance. The school’s location contributes to the diverse clinical experience in that most of our clinical rotations are within an hour of the University, yet remain diverse in patient populations and levels of care.”

Pending graduation of its first class, the Gardner-Webb University Physician Assistant Studies (PA) Program, one of only 199 in the U.S., received provisional accreditation status in September 2013 from the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA). Based in the University’s new College of Health Sciences facility, the PA program enrolled its third class in January 2016.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University’s purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).