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Office of University
Communications

January 25, 2016

College Experience Helped Alex Ellwood ('12) Develop Skills Essential to his Job

As sports director of the Lake Norman (N.C.) YMCA, Alex Ellwood ('12) combines his degree in psychology from Gardner-Webb University with his love of sports.

His job involves coordinating youth and adult sports leagues including basketball, flag football, soccer, and baseball. He also teaches sports clinics for preschoolers and physical education for homeschool students. He's also involved with the summer camp program and the Christian Emphasis Committee.

"I work closely with financial development to raise awareness and dollars for our YMCA's mission," Ellwood added. "And I recruit and train volunteer coaches for our programs."

He comes in contact with many people on a daily basis—from parents to potential donors—and being able to communicate effectively contributes to the success of the Y's programs. These are skills he learned while researching and writing papers in college, and his degree in psychology gives him insight into working with all ages and athletic abilities.

"I enjoyed my sports psychology class in college. That class taught me about the mental, physical, and emotional preparation that athletes go through before and during big games," Ellwood explained. "I also enjoyed the child psychology class, where I learned about the progression of cognitive and motor skills that children learn in different steps. I teach 3- to 5-year-old kids in my sports clinics and that knowledge comes in handy when deciding what skills they can learn and what skills they need to work on later."

Ellwood, a Fort Mill, S.C., native, lives in Mooresville, N.C., with his wife, Chelsea Turlington Ellwood, who graduated from Gardner-Webb in 2013. The two met while playing Ultimate Frisbee on the quad, one of the many activities Ellwood enjoyed on campus.

"My experiences at Gardner-Webb helped me grow as a person in maturity and in character. The classes I took, the friends I made, the clubs I joined, and the job opportunities I took all played a role in who I have become today and how I relate with people in my career," Ellwood affirmed. "I played intramural sports, was involved in the

Student Government Association, worked in residence life, served in Presidential Associates (a group designated to help Gardner-Webb President Dr. Frank Bonner represent the student population at special events), attended sporting events, was involved with Campus Ministries, and interned in the office of communications and marketing.”

Ellwood discovered Gardner-Webb while searching the Internet for schools in North Carolina.

“When I came for my visit, it just felt like home,” Ellwood recalled. “My admissions counselor was very helpful and instrumental in my coming to Gardner-Webb, as well.”

While he was in college, his family moved to Missouri, and he considered transferring to a school near them. In the end, Gardner-Webb’s close-knit community kept him in Boiling Springs, N.C.

“I stayed at Gardner-Webb instead of following my family across the country,” he shared. “The people at Gardner-Webb played a huge role in my staying at the college as well. I really liked the professors in the psychology department, especially Dr. David Carscaddon and Dr. James Morgan, and director of counseling services, Cindy Wallace. They were very knowledgeable about the field and very helpful in explaining the material and relating it to real-world situations. I also really enjoyed Dr. Ron Williams (professor emeritus of religious studies) for New Testament class.”

His advice to prospective students is to take advantage of all the learning opportunities Gardner-Webb offers—in and out of the classroom.

“Make good friends, get involved in different things, but spend time getting to know yourself as well,” he encouraged. “There are a lot of authentic Christians at Gardner-Webb who spoke truth into my life. That has and will have a lasting effect.”