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### **Gardner-Webb Student Explores Opportunities in Field of Science**

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# Gardner-Webb Student Explores Opportunities in Field of Science

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Office of University  
Communications

November 10, 2015

## *Lessons Learned From GWU Professors Helped Wendy Harmon Excel in Internships*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Wendy Harmon grew up with the mountains, rivers, lakes, and streams of western North Carolina at her back door. Some of her fondest memories are of outdoor exploratory excursions with her parents, Tommy and Darlene Harmon, where she literally first got her feet wet in ecology – the study of how organisms interact with their environments.

Her mother was a Gardner-Webb graduate, but Harmon wanted to make her own decision about where to go to college.

“Initially, I thought it might be a little too close to home, but after I came to campus, I knew this was the place I needed to be,” she shared.

She enjoyed her studies in the science department and knew early on that she wanted an internship after her freshman year. Most companies do not offer intern positions to freshmen, so she asked Dr. Tom Jones, her biology professor and the honors program associate dean, for advice on how to land one. He told her to apply to 20 and she might get one.

By January she had applied to more than 16 and was accepted for two valuable experiences, earning a spot on a four-day SEEDS National Field Trip to Trout Lake Station in Wisconsin and a summer internship to study humpback whales with New England Coastal Wildlife Alliance in Plymouth Bay, Mass.

Her professors helped her take her exams early in order to arrive on time for the Wisconsin adventure. “The science department has been absolutely wonderful to me and I consider many of them role models,” Harmon reflected. “They may never know how truly thankful I am for each and every one of them.”

The next summer, Harmon applied for internships in the North Carolina State Government Internship Program. She was among about 1,000 applicants for 70 positions throughout the state. She was chosen for an educator position at the Pisgah Center for Wildlife Education in Brevard.

At first she wasn't sure about being an educator, because she has always wanted to do research. But she found her classes at GWU had prepared her to teach a wide audience from the preschooler to the 40-year-old.

“The GWU experience of having close contact with my professors helped me to know how to communicate and relate to the people I was working with,” she observed. “Smaller class sizes allow professors to connect with their students, and offer one-on-one help when needed. Also, students are able to develop stronger personal opinions, due to the allowance of discussion in the classroom. When Dr. Jones asks me a question in class, I give an answer and we discuss it. He is so intelligent, but treats everyone with respect and so much care. The professors want to see you grow as an individual. Because of their example, I was able to adapt teaching methods to different audiences.”

In the small setting at Pisgah, she worked to draw out the shy children. “I loved seeing the shy child transformed and asking me more questions,” she said.

Harmon plans to go to graduate school, but is unsure whether it will be for research or something else. She is sure, however, that GWU has prepared her for wherever the next step leads.

“My professors here not only formed me as an educated person, but as a better person for society,” she affirmed. “The knowledge the GWU science faculty has to offer is invaluable. Their life experiences are openly shared with the students, and these experiences have allowed insight beyond the classroom. Professors here understand how to shape successful graduate students, and well-qualified professionals. I hope that every student will take advantage not only of the information they learn in class, but will also seek out the professional knowledge our science faculty has to offer.”

*Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them for professional success and for productive citizenship.*