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Office of University
Communications

November 10, 2015

Madison Cates ('13) Awarded Full Financial Funding for Graduate Studies

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. — As he delves into research for his doctoral studies, Madison W. Cates ('13) is reminded of his years at Gardner-Webb University—both in and out of the classroom.

Madison Cates

A Ph.D. student in American history, Cates was awarded full financial funding to attend the University of Florida in Gainesville, Fla.

“My current studies are constantly aided by mental and written notes taken from meaningful conversations in the Broad River Coffee Shop, Dover Library, or in course lectures,” Cates shared. “The opportunity to work with mentors like Drs. Timothy Vanderburg, Joseph Moore, and David K. Yelton on research papers and my senior honors thesis was unique and immensely beneficial.”

Cates graduated from high school in Hillsborough, N.C., and received a Bachelor of Arts in History at GWU. While a senior at GWU, he received an H.Y. Benedict Fellowship from the Alpha Chi Honor Society for his graduate studies at N.C. State University, where he completed his Master of Arts in History in May 2015. His research at the University of Florida deals with the Civil Rights Movement in the South in the 1960s and 1970s with particular emphasis on North Carolina.

“I chose to study the Civil Rights Movement, because I was interested in the ways in which faith and theology interact with political change,” Cates said. “Taking Dr. Moore’s seminar on the ‘Long Civil Rights Movement’ exposed me to a wide range of recent scholarship that helped me further develop my current research.”

Moore, Assistant Professor of History in the Department of Social Sciences, says GWU professors create an environment where students move beyond rote learning.

“In my course on the Civil Rights movement, Madison tackled complex topics with such depth that when the semester ended he genuinely knew more about his research project than I did,” Moore observed. “That is what happens here. Gardner-Webb empowers

students with the research skills they need so they can master their own subjects and become experts themselves. The goal is not for the professor to be all knowing. It is for the professor to guide the student in the process of making his or her own achievements.”

Cates believes this exchange of ideas between students and professors inspired his quest for acquiring knowledge.

“I am grateful beyond measure for the relationships formed with friends, classmates, professors, and staff,” he offered. “I loved getting close attention and frequent feedback on research projects from faculty and peers. The collaborative atmosphere for discussing research or social issues challenged me to ask big questions.”

His learning experiences at GWU, however, went beyond his studies in history and political science.

“The ability to take a wide variety of courses and get to know thoughtful, compassionate people helped guide my spiritual and intellectual development,” Cates explained. “Being involved in the Honors Student Association, Alpha Chi Honor Society, and Student Government Association allowed me to discuss and debate ideas with friends and peers across disciplines. For example, being able to attend the Alpha Chi National Convention in Nashville was great preparation for the kind of scholarly interactions that occur at academic conferences.”

Cates also said his experiences at GWU instilled the values of humility, compassion, and hope to his academic and spiritual life.

“I cannot imagine a better community of learning,” he concluded. “The opportunities to ask and investigate challenging questions within a caring, Christian community made a great difference in my life. I am very thankful and fortunate for the continued friendships and relationships I have at GWU.”

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).