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Communications

November 4, 2015

Josh Johnson Working at Purdue in Analytical Chemistry

In his graduate studies, Josh Johnson ('15) is developing and optimizing an instrument that could someday unlock the mysteries of Mars.

His passion to explore the chemical makeup of the universe began at the Gardner-Webb University Laboratory Center in Withrow Mathematics and Science Hall.

It was during a chemistry course that Johnson discovered a desire to research issues that really matter. Recognizing his interests, Professor Dr. Stefka Eddins encouraged Johnson to explore environmental chemistry. She and other faculty members also gave him several opportunities for experiential learning through the GWU Honors Program and Alpha Chi National College Honor Society.

With the support of his professors, Johnson applied and was accepted into the competitive summer research program at National High Magnetic Field Laboratory, Florida State University. The experience confirmed his desire to be a professional analytical chemist.

Johnson believes guidance from the GWU faculty helped him discover his interests and pursue graduate school at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Ind.

“Gardner-Webb professors go out of their way to get to know students, to help us imagine what we want from our future,” he offered. “That’s not something that’s unique to me. I’ve seen those mentorships develop between many professors and students.”

In his studies at Purdue, he is working with Dr. Scott McLuckey, a pioneer in the field of mass spectrometry, which is an analytical chemistry technique that helps identify the amount and type of chemicals present in a sample.

“Gardner-Webb provided me with a solid background from which to build my knowledge of chemistry,” Johnson observed. “The small class sizes allow students and professors to get to know each other, which increases the educational investment of both parties. My involvement in extracurricular activities including independent research, Alpha Chi, student government, and honors allowed me to broaden my understanding, while the commitment of the chemistry professors let me gain depth of knowledge in my major.”

Not only did Johnson benefit from the personal attention he received from GWU professors, he was also inspired to hear from GWU alumni doing their own research.

“Gardner-Webb offers a small school environment with many of the connections afforded at a larger University,” Johnson explained. “Gardner-Webb graduates are committed alumni who seek to help students gain real-world experience. I stay in contact with most of the chemistry faculty and plan to make visits back to campus to talk to younger students about my research.”

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University provides exceptional educational opportunities within a Christian environment, preparing students to think critically, to succeed professionally, and to serve faithfully as members of their local and global communities.

Josh Johnson is developing and optimizing an Electrostatic Linear Ion Trap Mass Spectrometer with another graduate student at Purdue University.