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### Artist and GWU Swimmer Combines Passions in Undergraduate Research Project

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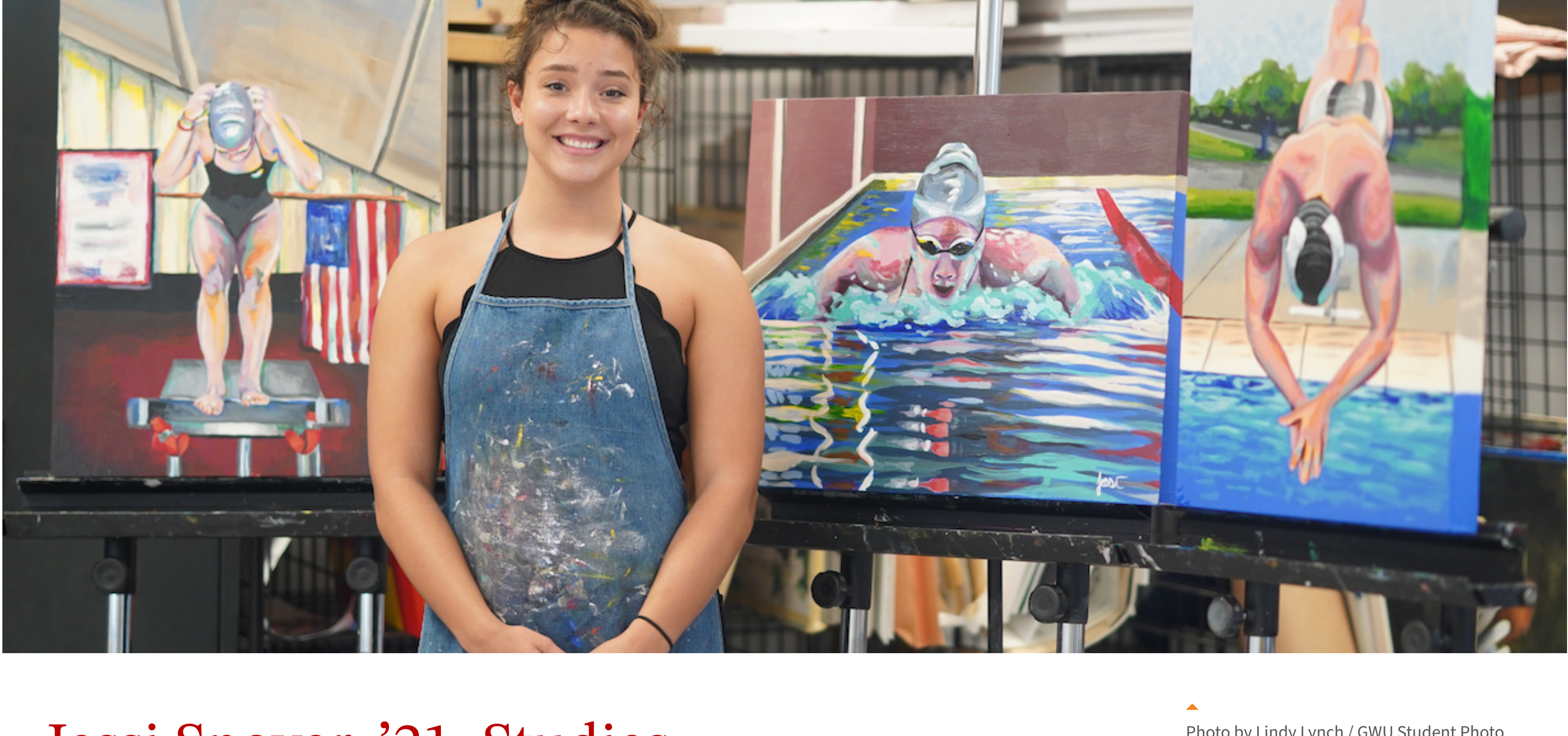
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UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

# Artist and GWU Swimmer Combines Passions in Undergraduate Research Project

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON OCTOBER 22, 2020



## Jessi Snover, '21, Studies Techniques of Famous Painters to Create Portrait of a Swimmer

Jessi Snover, '21, is an art major and a member of the Gardner-Webb University swim team. Her Undergraduate Research Project combined her two passions. "I wanted to study the unique physiology and development of a swimmer's body and interpret that from a photographic reference onto canvas," related Snover, of Greer, S.C.

One of 11 students who participated in the Gardner-Webb Undergraduate Research Scholars Program, Snover spent 40 hours a week for five weeks researching her topic. Students had faculty mentors to guide their studies. Snover's mentor was Susan Bell, professor of art.

Snover's project included a study of Thomas Eakins' strategies, techniques and use of photographic reference for painting swimmers. She also examined the techniques of other famous painters, such as Norman Rockwell. "My research started with daily trips to the library," she offered. "Through my readings, I developed a better understanding of how Thomas Eakins and Norman Rockwell, among others, captured the human figure and then applied it to the canvas. After doing a lot of research in the library, I made preparations to conduct a photo shoot of a female swimmer, a teammate of mine. Once this was done, choosing only two out of 100 fabulous photos was the challenge."



Photo by Lindy Lynch / GWU Student Photo Team

For Snover, the library research was the hardest part of the process, because she was eager to move onto the hands-on creative work. "I had to be quite disciplined to sit in one place for eight hours a day just to read and learn," she observed. "But after a while, I started to understand and appreciate how Thomas Eakins and Norman Rockwell created their art. During our regularly scheduled meetings, my advisor showed me how to efficiently break up my time and how to effectively apply what I learned through my studies to my creative process. This really helped me stay focused."

Bell not only guided her through the tedious research process, she recommended using some of the finest art supplies, which were new to Snover. She also gave pointers and tips to help Snover improve her painting techniques. "She introduced me to many different skills that I had not learned until now," Snover noted. "She helps me stay focused to create the vision I have in my mind. This one-on-one mentoring time has been invaluable and so exciting and rewarding."

While studying Rockwell, Snover was surprised to discover that he fully documented all of his process work for each painting. "Each of his paintings has a series of photos that go along with it to show in detail how he created each one," she shared. "Learning and seeing how this master of an artist created his works allowed me the chance to better learn and understand how to create my own paintings for this project."

Snover hopes to work full time as an artist, so the project gave her a glimpse into her career. "I have applied myself to this project for a minimum of 40 hours each week," she stated. "It has opened my eyes to the fact that I have so much more to learn about painting in general. Because this is what I want to do for a living, I want to learn everything there is to learn. Learning this new process of capturing specific photo images and using those as references in art has been a gift. Through this learning process, my art has matured. With the new techniques I have learned, I will be able to better share my vision to those who care to see."

To other students who may be thinking about applying for an Undergraduate Research Grant, Snover said, "Do it. Not only does it open doors for you as a student in your education, but it opens many doors to the world of possibilities."

She continued, "Before this program started, I was under the impression I knew everything about acrylics, and how to translate an image to canvas. Now after many hours of research, I have so much more knowledge on the subject. Having this opportunity has been a blessing and an overall joy. The knowledge I have gained overall from this program will be applied in every painting I will do in the future."

[Learn more about the Undergraduate Research Scholars Program.](#)



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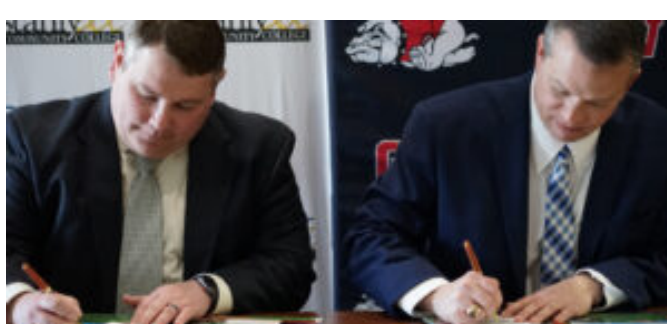


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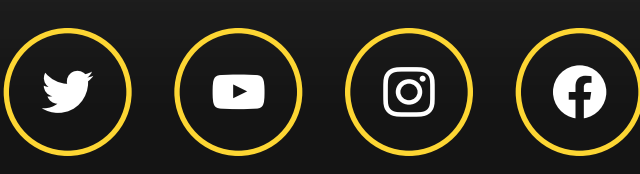
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