

Gardner-Webb University

## Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

---

Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive

Gardner-Webb Publications

---

5-6-2021

### After a Year of World-Shifting Events, Class of 2021 Ready to Celebrate Achievements

Office of University Communications

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gardner-webb-newscenter-archive>

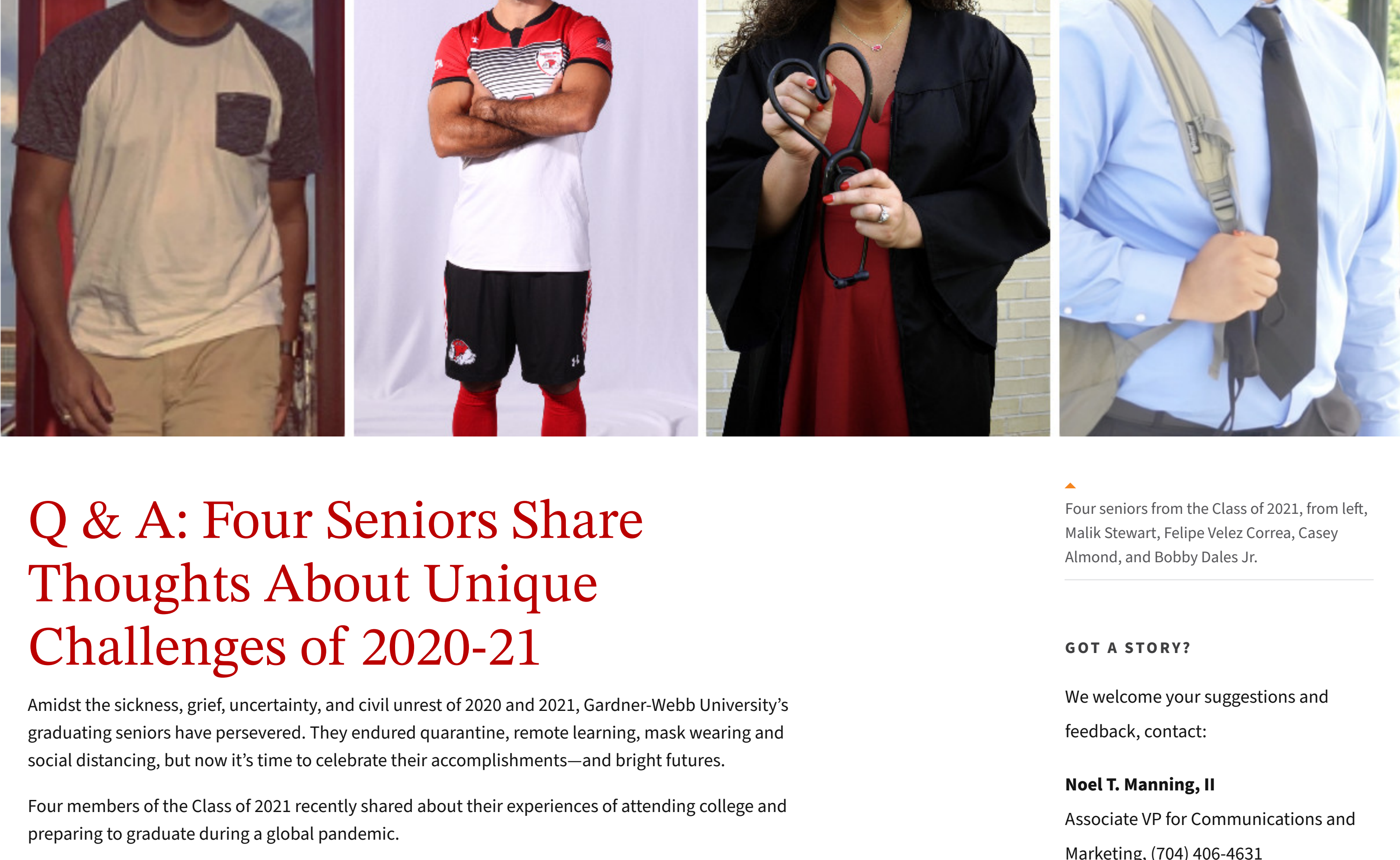
---



CAMPUS NEWS

After a Year of World-Shifting Events, Class of 2021 Ready to Celebrate Achievements

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON MAY 6, 2021



Q & A: Four Seniors Share Thoughts About Unique Challenges of 2020-21

Amidst the sickness, grief, uncertainty, and civil unrest of 2020 and 2021, Gardner-Webb University's graduating seniors have persevered. They endured quarantine, remote learning, mask wearing and social distancing, but now it's time to celebrate their accomplishments—and bright futures.

Four members of the Class of 2021 recently shared about their experiences of attending college and preparing to graduate during a global pandemic.

These seniors are:

- Felipe Velez Correa is an international business major from Medellin, Colombia. He plays on the men's soccer team and is a member of Delta Mu Delta.
- Malik Stewart, a double major in biomedical sciences and chemistry from Parksley, Va. A member of the cheerleading team, he is an Honors student, Learning, Enrichment and Assistance Program (LEAP) Tutor and member of Sigma Zeta.
- Bobby Dales Jr., a broadcast journalism major from Rocky Mount, N.C. A football player, he is a member of Lambda Pi Eta.
- Casey Almond, a nursing major from Dallas, N.C. Member of the Honors Student Association and the Health Occupation Student of America.

▲ Bobby Dales Jr. works at his ESPN+ internship with Phil Constantino.

**Q: What are your plans for after graduation?**

**Correa:** MBA Program at GWU, and continue playing soccer.

**Stewart:** Georgetown University, pursuing a master's degree in biochemistry and molecular biology

**Dales:** I'm taking one day at a time. I know that God has a plan.Options: Applied to ESPN in Charlotte, N.C., and Environmental Protection Agency in Raleigh, N.C., or graduate school at Gardner-Webb or Northwestern (Evanston, Ill.)

**Almond:** I have accepted a job as a nurse in the Emergency Department at Caromont Regional Hospital in Gastonia, N.C. I plan on obtaining my BSN by next May, and then I will start applying to graduate school.

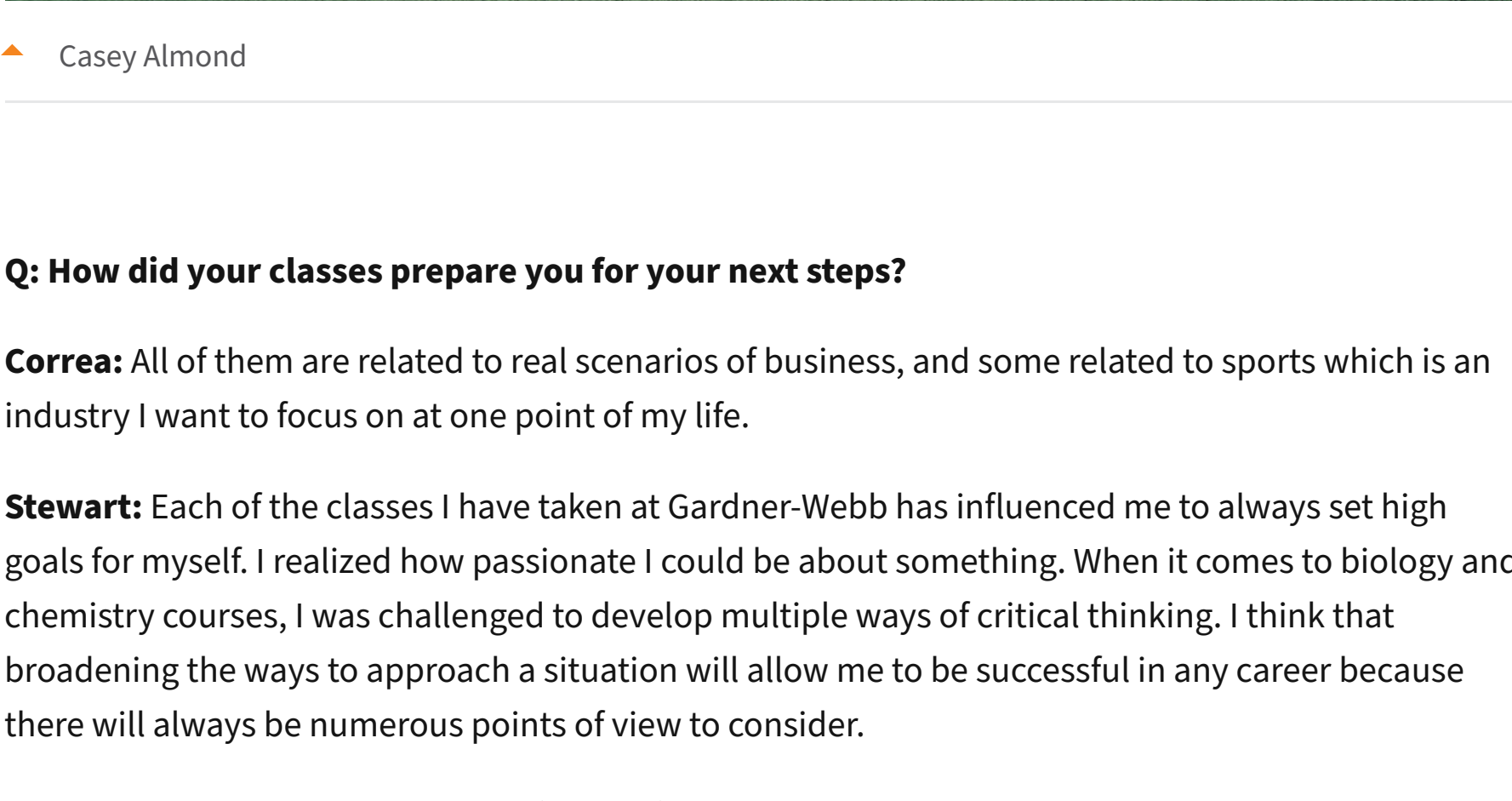
**Q: What do you value most about your Gardner-Webb experience?**

**Correa:** The people I met, the friends I made, the way I have learned to enjoy life and myself far from home, the independence gained.

**Stewart:** During my GWU experience, I valued the dedication of the professors in the natural science department. Each professor showed that they truly wanted each student to be successful in whatever path he or she wanted to pursue. Because I had many classes with the same professors, I was able to develop strong relationships with each of them, which is something I never would have been able to do at a bigger school. Each professor has been willing to spend time to help me reach my goals, including double majoring, which took countless meetings to figure out the course details.

**Dales:** I got an internship with Mr. Phil (Constantino, director of Broadcasting, Communication and New Media for GW athletics) and ESPN+. He showed me the ropes, and I learned a lot and gained a lot of experience from being hands-on at a lot of games and learning everything there is to know about broadcasting and doing technical work. It was a lot of time management, and I grew from the experience. I had to balance my internship, completing my schoolwork and my major assignments.

**Almond:** I value the friendships and connections that I have made the most during my time at Gardner-Webb. The University truly values name over number, and I am so glad that I was able to form close relationships with faculty. I have enjoyed being able to lead both the Honors Student Association (HSA) and Health Occupation Students of America (HOSA) as president.



▲ Casey Almond

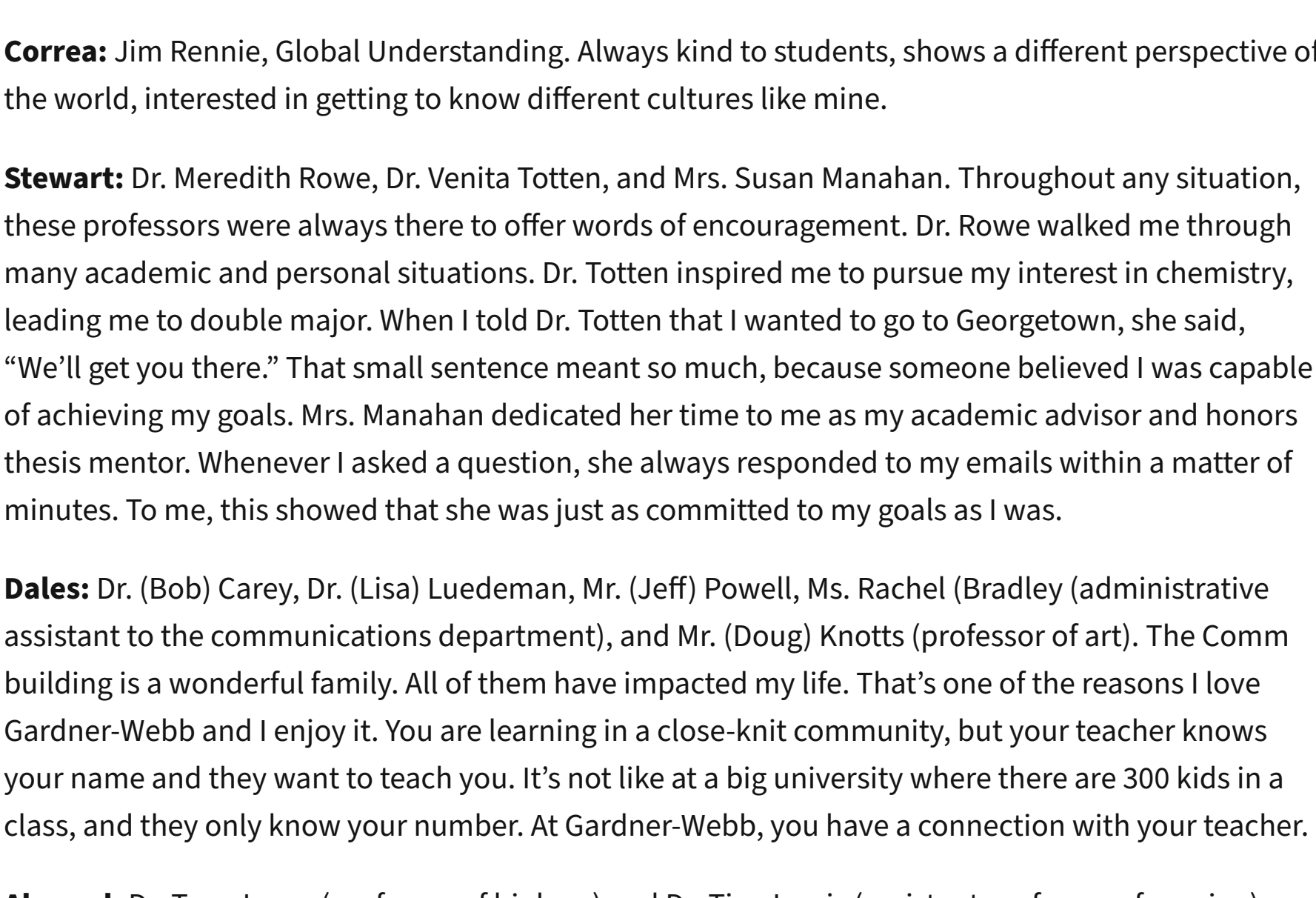
**Q: How did your classes prepare you for your next steps?**

**Correa:** All of them are related to real scenarios of business, and some related to sports which is an industry I want to focus on at one point of my life.

**Stewart:** Each of the classes I have taken at Gardner-Webb has influenced me to always set high goals for myself. I realized how passionate I could be about something. When it comes to biology and chemistry courses, I was challenged to develop multiple ways of critical thinking. I think that broadening the ways to approach a situation will allow me to be successful in any career because there will always be numerous points of view to consider.

**Dales:** Over the course of my years (at GWU), I've lived in the Comm building. It's been an experience that has taught me a lot, whether it's photography, video editing, Photoshop, Indesign, and communication theory. It has allowed me to know the things that I am able to do and achieve that I never thought I could. I appreciate my professors, not just in the communications department, but all over for giving me life experiences that I can take with me and continue to learn.

**Almond:** My nursing classes and clinical experiences helped me to develop the skills I need to become a nurse. I was able to get hands-on experience during lab and simulation before having to do it in the real clinical setting. My preceptorship in the emergency department helped me to decide the specialty that I want to pursue.



▲ Malik Stewart

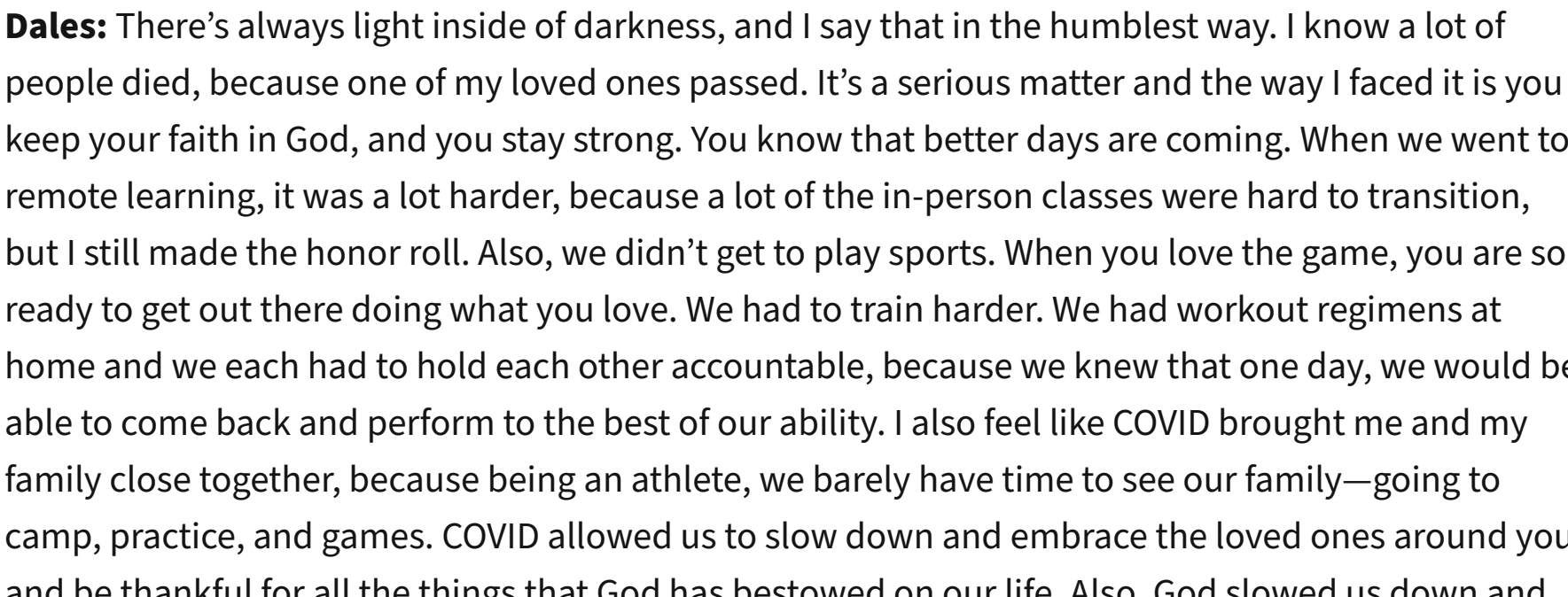
**Q: What GWU classes or professors have been most memorable in your educational journey and why?**

**Correa:** Jim Rennie, Global Understanding. Always kind to students, shows a different perspective of the world, interested in getting to know different cultures like mine.

**Stewart:** Dr. Meredith Rowe, Dr. Venita Totten, and Mrs. Susan Manahan. Throughout any situation, these professors were always there to offer words of encouragement. Dr. Rowe walked me through many academic and personal situations. Dr. Totten inspired me to pursue my interest in chemistry, leading me to double major. When I told Dr. Totten that I wanted to go to Georgetown, she said, "We'll get you there." That small sentence meant so much, because someone believed I was capable of achieving my goals. Mrs. Manahan dedicated her time to me as my academic advisor and honors thesis mentor. Whenever I asked a question, she always responded to my emails within a matter of minutes. To me, this showed that she was just as committed to my goals as I was.

**Dales:** Dr. (Bob) Carey, Dr. (Lisa) Luedeman, Mr. (Jeff) Powell, Ms. Rachel (Bradley (administrative assistant to the communications department), and Mr. (Doug) Knotts (professor of art). The Comm building is a wonderful family. All of them have impacted my life. That's one of the reasons I love Gardner-Webb and I enjoy it. You are learning in a close-knit community, but your teacher knows your name and they want to teach you. It's not like at a big university where there are 300 kids in a class, and they only know your number. At Gardner-Webb, you have a connection with your teacher.

**Almond:** Dr. Tom Jones (professor of biology) and Dr. Tina Lewis (assistant professor of nursing) helped me tremendously during my time at GWU. I worked closely with Dr. Jones because he is the dean of the honors program. I loved being able to travel and try new things with him. He challenged me to write a thesis and was always there to give me advice when I needed it. Dr. Lewis served as my thesis advisor and the advisor of HOSA. We saw each other on a weekly basis to edit my thesis and to plan events for HOSA. I am thankful for her advice and her willingness to help me through my entire writing process.



▲ Felipe Velez Correa

**Q: 2020 was a challenging year with COVID-19 and racial injustices. What were your biggest challenges related to these events and how did you overcome them?**

**Correa:** Having to fly back home and having classes online for a semester and a half. I overcame these situations with the support that GWU professors and stuff provided me. Also, with the help of my family.

**Stewart:** During the many challenges of 2020, I decided that I needed to better myself as an individual, whether it was personally or academically. Instead of allowing these negative thoughts and emotions control my life, I chose to become someone who could help change the world. While this is going to take some time, I believe that every situation should be viewed as a window for many opportunities to influence someone else's life. I believe that the way we approach these events will ultimately shape who we are as individuals. No matter what the situation is, there is always room for improvement.

**Dales:** There's always light inside of darkness, and I say that in the humblest way. I know a lot of people died, because one of my loved ones passed. It's a serious matter and the way I faced it is you keep your faith in God, and you stay strong. You know that better days are coming. When we went to remote learning, it was a lot harder, because a lot of the in-person classes were hard to transition, but I still made the honor roll. Also, we didn't get to play sports. When you love the game, you are so ready to get out there doing what you love. We had to train harder. We had workout regimens at home and we each had to hold each other accountable, because we knew that one day, we would be able to come back and perform to the best of our ability. I also feel like COVID brought me and my family close together, because being an athlete, we barely have time to see our family—going to camp, practice, and games. COVID allowed us to slow down and embrace the loved ones around you and be thankful for all the things that God has bestowed on our life. Also, God slowed us down and the environment started to get better during that time. As far as the racial injustices, it's hard to see that happen, and I feel like you have to be a voice. The Black Student Association had the march around the school and let people know what is right and that our voices matter. I led the prayer on that day and that was something I was so grateful to do. It's an experience I will never forget. You have to continue to press on toward the mark; the voices need to be heard. You have to keep praying. There is a God, and he is looking out for every one of us. We all know what is right and wrong and it would be great if we all came together in one mindset.

**Almond:** COVID-19 brought a lot of restrictions to students and healthcare workers. It took some time to adapt to the PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) that we would have to wear while working in the hospital. We are now required to wear a face shield, N-95, and surgical mask while providing patient care. I was often pulled to work in COVID units, and it was hard not allowing patients to have visitors. As a leader of two student organizations, restrictions on the number of people allowed at events and spacing restrictions made it hard for us to hold in-person events. We tried our best to have as many in-person events as we would normally have in the fall and spring semesters. If we could not safely meet in person, we would find fun virtual events to plan online or over Zoom.

**Q: What one word would you use to describe GWU and why?**

**Correa:** Memorable. I have some of the best memories I'll carry with me for a lifetime at GWU.

**Stewart:** Invigorating. Before coming to GWU I knew I was a strong student; however, I felt that I was lacking in some skills, and I didn't think that I was going to be successful enough to get into a university as prestigious as Georgetown. In my classes, my love for learning and the sciences only increased. Now that I am graduating, I can confidently say that I am sure that I will be a great scientist.

**Dales:** Experience. I've met a lot of amazing people—the teachers, friends, everybody. I've made friends and bonds that will never be broken. Gardner-Webb made me into the man I am today. It is a home away from home. The experience is immeasurable; the teachers are wonderful; I tip my hat to each individual who imparted into my life and made a positive connection with me.

**Almond:** One word I would use to describe GWU is community. When I first arrived to the small town of Boiling Springs, I was not expecting to find such a welcoming community. You immediately get a sense of being at home on campus because everyone is so welcoming and everyone knows each other. It is a great feeling being known by name by the faculty and being able to form relationships that will last beyond college.

*Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.*

PREVIOUS NEWS ARTICLE

In late 60s, Gardner-Webb Gave Professors, Like Tony Eastman, Incentive to Earn Doctorates

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS | MAY 6, 2021

NEXT NEWS ARTICLE

Gardner-Webb Awards Degrees in Expanded Spring Commencement on May 7 and 8

OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS | MAY 10, 2021

Related News

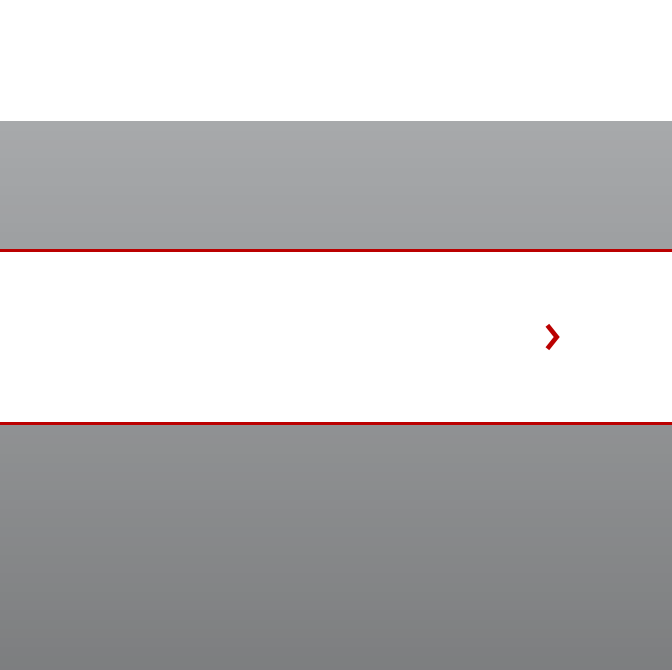
See All News >

NEWS ARTICLE

Gardner-Webb Sigma Zeta National Science and Mathematics Honor Society Inducts New Members

Students Recognized for Academic Achievement in Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Computer Science BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Nineteen students were inducted into the Sigma Zeta National Science and Mathematics Honor Society on April [...]

WEB COMMUNICATIONS | APRIL 7, 2022

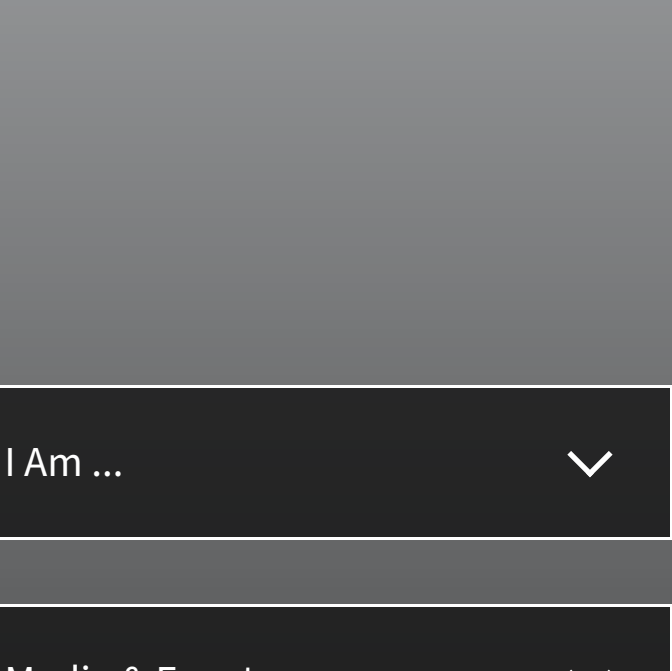


NEWS ARTICLE

President's 2022 Early Career Award Recognizes Social Sciences Professor

Dr. Aihua Zhang Honored for Exceptional Productivity in Scholarship, Creative Discovery and Instruction BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Dr. Aihua Zhang, assistant professor in the Gardner-Webb University Department of Social Sciences, has been [...]

WEB COMMUNICATIONS | APRIL 5, 2022



NEWS ARTICLE

Stanly Community College Partners with Gardner-Webb to Offer Co-Admission Agreements

'Bulldog-Bound' and Pathway Agreements Make Transferring to GWU Easy for SCC Students BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Officials from Gardner-Webb University and Stanly Community College (SCC) in Albemarle, N.C., signed agreements on April [...]

WEB COMMUNICATIONS | APRIL 5, 2022

