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Undergraduate Research Involves Using Fruit Peels to Remove Copper from Water

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Undergraduate Research Involves Using Fruit Peels to Remove Copper from Water

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2020



Experience Prepared Laura Herrera-Santin, '22, for Rigors of Graduate School

This past summer, Gardner-Webb University student Laura Herrera-Santin, of Gastonia, N.C., took another step toward realizing her goal of becoming an OB/GYN. She gained laboratory experience in the Undergraduate Research Scholars Summer Program, which helped to prepare her for graduate school.

Herrera-Santin is a first-generation college student, inspired by the sacrifices her parents made so that she could get an education. "I want to be able to give back to them for working so hard for me to have a better life," Herrera-Santin affirmed. "They are very supportive by encouraging me to do my best every day and by accompanying me to events where I have received awards."

She is a biomedical concentration major and chemistry minor, who will graduate in 2022. As one of 11 students who received a summer Undergraduate Research Scholar grant, Herrera-Santin worked 40 hours a week for five weeks on her project, which she hopes to present in a professional forum. Her faculty mentor was Dr. Venita Totten, professor of chemistry.

"The faculty were a tremendous help," Herrera-Santin noted. "They were willing to help me when I had questions. They were extremely cautious about social distancing, and at the same time, allowed us summer scholars to feel close with the experience."

Her research involved testing the viability of certain fruit peels to remove copper from water. "I got the idea to use fruits for the research, because that's something common that everyone would know about and most people have or can get in a grocery store," Herrera-Santin offered. "I used kiwi, tangerine, and banana peels that had been dried for 24 hours and ground."



Through the experiment, she discovered that she needed several fruit peelings to get the results she wanted. Through trial and error, she found a combination to get closer to the outcome she expected. "This research has not only prepared me for my career by experiencing real research and experimenting on my own, it has opened my eyes to researching more on ways to help the environment," she asserted. "It's been an unforgettable experience, and I am very grateful for this opportunity. Gardner-Webb University is an amazing school full of great opportunities."

She encouraged other students to apply for Undergraduate Research. "Come open-minded, because anything can happen," she said. "Also, don't be intimidated by the thought of working on your own because the mentors/faculty are very open to helping with anything. It is a life-changing experience that is unforgettable."

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

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We welcome your suggestions and feedback, contact:

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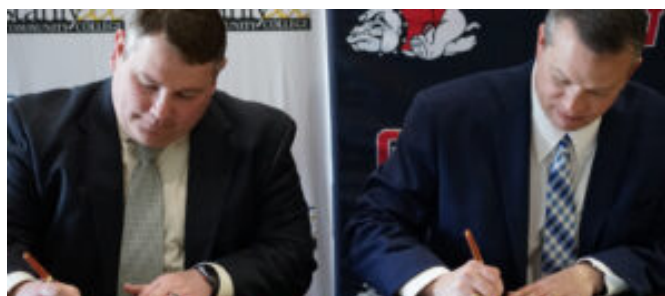


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