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Gardner-Webb Alumnus Honored with Prestigious Research Award

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ALUMNI

Gardner-Webb Alumnus Honored with Prestigious Research Award

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON APRIL 7, 2021

David Podgorski, '07, Recognized for His Innovative Efforts in Chemistry

Biology and chemistry graduates from Gardner-Webb University, such as Dr. David Podgorski, '07, make an impact around the world—studying in prestigious graduate schools, publishing in top chemistry journals, researching the COVID-19 virus, and serving in healthcare fields. They leave GWU prepared for the next step, whether that's beginning a career or pursuing a graduate degree.

Podgorski recently received one of the most prestigious awards given by the University of New Orleans (UNO) in Louisiana. Podgorski, a researcher at the university, was awarded the [UNO Faculty Early-Career Creativity, Research and Scholarship Award for \\$7,500](#). Bestowed by the Office of Research, these awards are presented to innovative faculty members who have distinguished themselves in their fields and at UNO.

Podgorski and his group of researchers work in the fields of analytical chemistry, environmental chemistry, organic geochemistry and biogeochemistry. They also analyze mobilization, processing and fate of pollutants. In 2018, he was awarded a three-year \$129,000 grant by the Louisiana Board of Regents for a laboratory study that attempted to improve science's capability to understand relationships between the chemical composition of organic carbon and its reactivity. He also serves on the Louisiana National Estuary Research Reserve Site Development Committee and is a member of the Editorial Board for Marine Biogeochemistry.



Alumnus David Podgorski returned to GWU in 2013 to speak with students and faculty about his position and research at FSU's High Magnetic Field Laboratory.

While Podgorski's research has contributed to the field of environmental science, he almost didn't pursue a career as a researcher. At Gardner-Webb, according to Podgorski, he was an average, borderline B-C student. "I wouldn't even be in science if it were not for the education, guidance, and encouragement that I received, in particular, from Drs. (Ben) Brooks, (Stefka) Eddins, and (Venita) Totten," Podgorski shared recently.

Originally from Virginia Beach, Va., Podgorski hadn't thought about going to graduate school, but his GWU professors encouraged him to apply. He was in the spring semester of his senior year, much later than most students start applying. "The professors believed in me and challenged me to believe in myself," Podgorski offered. "They played the role of cheerleader and coach. At larger institutions your professors might not even know you. At Gardner-Webb, the lasting relationships between professors and students are what make the institution unique and worthwhile."

After receiving his Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Gardner-Webb University, he completed his Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry in 2011 at Florida State University (FSU) under William T. Cooper. Podgorski said the practical lessons Gardner-Webb professors taught him about graduate study—how to handle the workload, how to choose an advisor, how to conduct long-term research projects—were the secret not only to his getting accepted, but to his finishing the Ph.D. in just four years.



He worked as a postdoctoral research assistant under Alan G. Marshall in the Ion Cyclotron Resonance Program at the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory followed by several years as research faculty with a joint appointment with the FSU Department of Earth, Ocean, and Atmospheric Sciences, conducting experiments on Deepwater Horizon, the largest marine oil spill in history. While in Florida, he had the opportunity to serve as a mentor for several GWU students who were interns for the program. Podgorski joined the UNO Department of Chemistry as an assistant professor in 2017.

Just as Gardner-Webb's professors invested in him, Podgorski is a mentor to his students. "I want students to know that, if they're willing to work hard, they can accomplish something tremendous," he asserted.

[Learn more about the Department of Natural Sciences at GWU.](#)

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We welcome your suggestions and feedback, contact:

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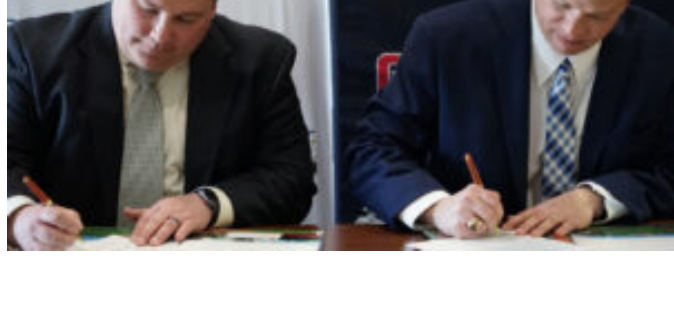


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