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Gardner-Webb Student Discovers His Calling in Anatomy and Physiology Class

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Gardner-Webb Student Discovers His Calling in Anatomy and Physiology Class

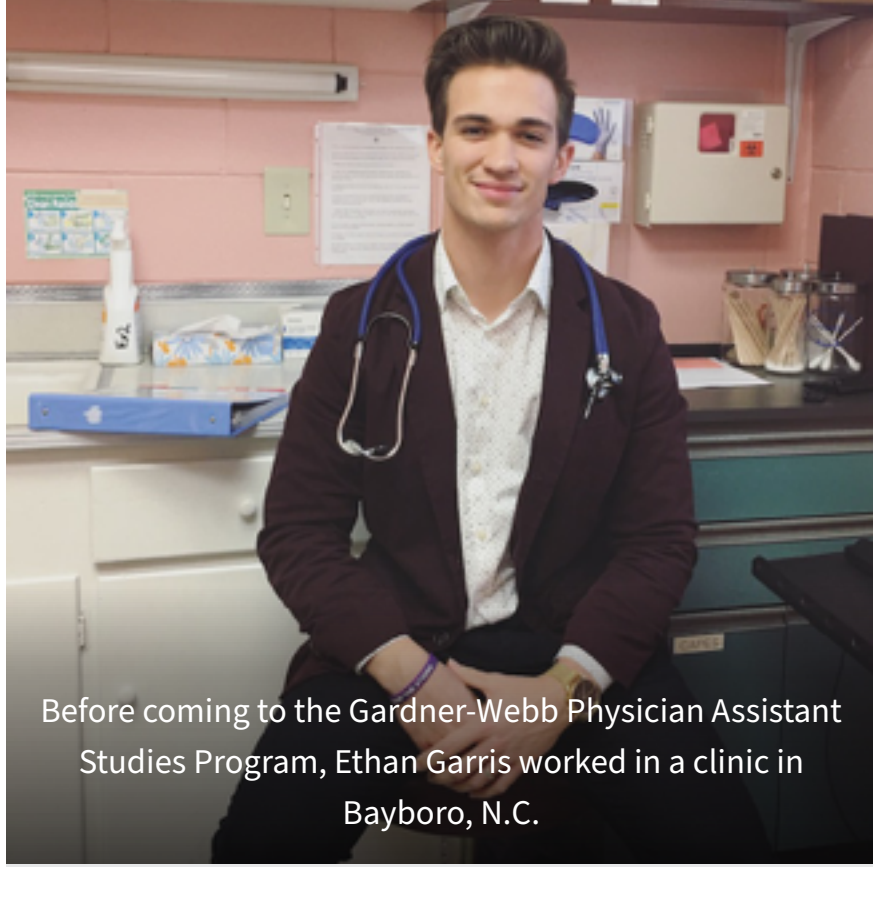
BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON OCTOBER 7, 2020



Ethan Garriss, '22, will Serve Others as a Physician Assistant

When Ethan Garriss took his first college course in anatomy and physiology, the study was fascinating, and he realized that he had finally found his calling. That class and its professor are the reasons why he is a student in the Gardner-Webb University Physician Assistant (PA) Studies Program Class of 2022.

“My professor was a retired doctor, and he inspired me to go into the medical field,” Garriss related. “To test his theory out, I began to volunteer at a hospital. One of the PA’s took me under his wing and showed me the ropes. I always thought I would do mission work, and I realized that as a PA, I could make a difference every day. In medicine with the right mindset, it’s a mission field every single time you have an interaction with a patient.”



Before coming to the Gardner-Webb Physician Assistant Studies Program, Ethan Garriss worked in a clinic in Bayboro, N.C.



Ethan Garriss in the simulation lab at GWU.

Garriss’ experience is similar to that of other Gardner-Webb PA students and alumni, who are serving in rural and urban areas in trauma centers, emergency departments, internal medicine clinics and other medical settings. During National PA Week, Oct. 6-12, the Gardner-Webb PA faculty, staff and students celebrate the PA profession and its significant contributions to the nation’s health. Over 7,000 PAs are licensed to practice in North Carolina by the N.C. Medical Board. Gardner-Webb is one of 11 PA programs in North Carolina. Since its establishment in 2014, GWU has graduated 145 students from the program. Currently, there are 34 students in the Class of 2021 and 35 in the Class of 2022. Gardner-Webb accepts 36 students in each cohort and begins a new cohort every January. The program is seven semesters long: four in the didactic phase and 3 in the clinical phase.

Garriss, who had struggled academically in high school and college, now excels as a PA student. “Once I found out what I wanted to do, I began to perform very well and experienced a motivation I never had before,” he observed. “I like to think of it as my purpose initiated my potential.”

He obtained his associate’s degree from Craven Community College (New Bern, N.C.) and earned a public health degree from East Carolina University (Greenville, N.C.). He worked as an EMT, and before he was accepted into Gardner-Webb’s program, Garriss was an assistant clinic coordinator at Hope Clinic in Bayboro, N.C. “I was the patient educator, managing chronic disease and performing normal nursing duties during clinic time,” he stated.



Ethan Garriss studies anatomy with GWU’s state-of-the-art Anatomage Table.

After researching PA programs, Garriss applied to Gardner-Webb and was invited to come for an interview. “Everyone was nice,” he reflected. “It was such a low-stress environment. I knew Gardner-Webb was the place for me.”

Garriss is in the didactic phase of his studies, which is 16 months in the classroom and features team-based learning modules and hands-on skills training. Gardner-Webb’s program includes a state-of-the-art Anatomage table, which is a 3D human anatomy model. The virtual system allows students to examine the anatomy exactly as they would on a cadaver.

In the 12-month clinical phase, Garriss will participate in Supervised Clinical Practice Experiences (SCPEs) in nine areas: family medicine, internal medicine, pediatrics, women’s health, emergency medicine, general surgery, mental health, one elective, and one rotation in an underserved community.

His classmates have become like family, and the professors are easily accessible. “The class feeds off each other, and we help each other with skills,” Garriss shared. “We all walk outside to socialize because of social distancing. We can go to the professors’ offices anytime we need to, even just to talk about rough days. They care about you as a person.”

[Learn more about the Department of Physician Assistant Studies](#)



Ethan Garriss' PA cohort provided blood pressure checks at a local church.

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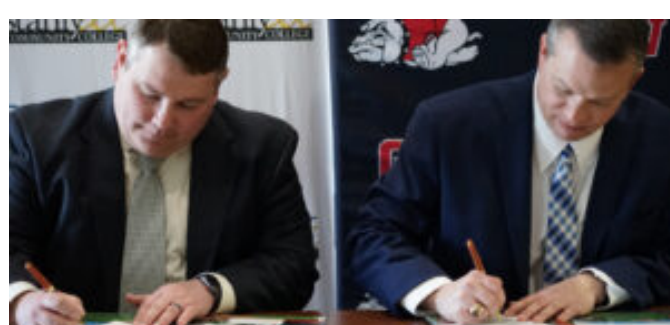


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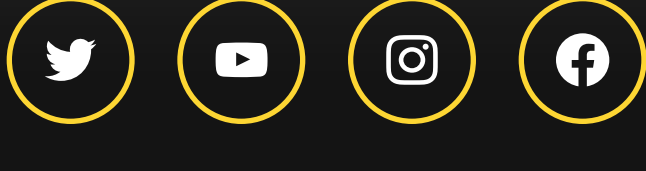
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