

**BULLDOG PROFILES**

## GWU's Academics and Extracurricular Activities Prepared Alumna for Graduate School and Optometry Field

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### Dr. Jessica Cameron, '08, Specializes in Serving Patients with Unusual Vision Problems

Recruited by the Gardner-Webb Swim Team, Dr. Jessica Cameron, '08, came to the University for more than its competitive swim program. The Florida native was also drawn to the campus and its people. "I fell in love with the beauty of the campus, the friendly and personal faculty, and small classroom sizes," Cameron affirmed.

She majored in biology, but didn't decide until her junior year where her degree would take her. "In the summers, I shadowed an optometrist as well as other physicians and realized I enjoyed the patient care interaction of an optometrist," Cameron related.

Her decision took her back home to Florida to earn her Doctor of Optometry at Nova Southeastern College of Optometry in Davie, Fla. Finishing in 2013, Cameron completed her residency in primary care at Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, Fla. While there, she presented numerous lectures as well as wrote a manuscript on the spontaneous closure of macular holes. A macular hole is a small break in the macula, located in the center of the eye's light-sensitive tissue called the retina. During her time at the VA, Cameron focused on quality patient care, setting a personal goal for herself to treat her patients as if they were family.



▲ Dr. Jessica Cameron

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She works in the Eye Clinic at University of Florida (UF) Health in Gainesville. Her specialty area is optometry and low vision. “We provide ocular health exams for many individuals who suffer from systemic and ocular pathologies that may be considered ‘not as common’ to the average practicing ocular provider,” Cameron explained. “This allows me to grow my knowledge as a provider, I am also surrounded by top educators that are clinicians at my office that can advise me as needed or vice versa.”

In addition to her responsibilities at UF Health, Cameron is also an active board member of the North Central Florida Optometric Society, and serves on the Fellowship Acceptance Committee of the American Academy of Optometry, responsible for testing and reviewing written works for optometry fellowship admittance. She enjoys mentoring pre-optometry UF students for job shadowing opportunities and is a regular speaker for local continuing education meetings.

Her abilities as a public speaker were gained in her Gardner-Webb classes. She appreciates the opportunities her Gardner-Webb professors gave her to succeed in graduate school and her career. “My classes and professors challenged me with the course work that prepared me for the demands of a doctoral education,” she stated. “Also, I was given public speaking roles in my senior science classes, and this prepared me as a physician to allow me to perform comfortable patient interaction and lecture skills.”

Susan Manahan, GWU assistant professor of biology, was also influential in Cameron’s GWU experience. “She was a primary individual who guided me,” Cameron reflected. “She was a great role model and demanded excellence with my education tasks. She also allowed me to participate as a teacher’s aide and teach small sections of a class. The skills I learned are now applied as I lecture to ophthalmology residents on topics related to optometry, such as optics, refraction, and low vision.”

Outside of academics, Cameron said Gardner-Webb’s close-knit campus provided a safe atmosphere to grow as an individual. “I enjoyed the ability to take on many roles: a competitive Division I athlete, a RA

(Resident Advisor) of a dorm, biology major, and I was even active in the theater department. I believe that my time spent at GWU influenced my personal and professional future.”

**Learn more about the Department of Natural Sciences.**



Dr. Jessica Cameron, center, poses with her co-workers, Genie (left) and Julie (right) on the eye clinic's opening day.

