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### Undergraduate Research Program Gives Scholar Time to Develop Creative Writing Skills

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**UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH**

# Undergraduate Research Program Gives Scholar Time to Develop Creative Writing Skills

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON DECEMBER 1, 2021



▲ As an Undergraduate Research Scholar, Sarah Goode used all the skills she's learned about creative writing from her classes at Gardner-Webb. Photo courtesy of Mary Klein (@marykleinphotography)

## Sarah Goode, '22, Begins Draft of Juvenile Fantasy Novel

By Sarianna Miranda-Rosado, '24, Intern for Communications

Since childhood, Sarah Goode has loved reading and writing stories—inspired by the way authors create images, retell ideas, and stir emotions. “I considered other pathways, like music and history, but writing was where I always found the most joy. At Gardner-Webb University, I’ve had the chance to hone my writing skills and deepen my understanding of the English language by being an English major,” Goode expressed.

The GWU Undergraduate Research Scholar Program gives students like Goode, of Lenoir, N.C., an opportunity to experience research discoveries that will aid in their future success. With her major, Goode chose a creative writing emphasis and is minoring in history. Her research project was to begin a draft of a juvenile fantasy novel. “The Undergraduate Research Scholar Program was a chance to take all that I learned from my creative writing classes and invest all my effort into one story,” Goode observed.

When writing her story, Goode ensured her style was consistent with young adult literature, her characters were well developed, and the plot proceeded at a good pace. “I used my non-writing time to ensure my story was built on a strong foundation,” Goode explained.



▲ Photo courtesy of Mary Klein  
(@marykleinphotography)

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In the process of writing the draft, some days were more productive than others, where Goode produced 3,000 words. Sometimes, though, she struggled to get 300. The biggest challenge for many writers, including Goode, is working through writer's block. She shared three make-it or break-it steps to overcome a creative slowdown, "The first is to simply keep writing. Ideas often develop in the process, not beforehand. The other ways to overcome writer's block are to take a break and do something habitual or to read the work of others. I often feel very refreshed and ready to work on my writing after reading a chapter or two from someone else's novel."

Professor Matthew Duffus mentored Goode. "In the moments when I felt my story was stuck, he always gave me encouragement and advice for moving forward," she praised. Along with the process, Duffus recommended books such as "No Plot, No Problem" By Chris Baty and "Wonderbook" by Jeff Vandermeer.

In her writing and academic growth during the process, Goode learned a lot about herself. "I have been surprised multiple times by the plot of my own story," she related. "Each writer has a different approach to writing. My approach is to start with a basic idea and characters and then let much of the plot develop along the way. There were times I didn't know where my story was heading, but it took me to some interesting places."

When she graduates from Gardner-Webb, Goode would like to teach English in middle school or as a foreign language to second language learners while incorporating creative writing. "I believe writing and stories not only teach how language can be used in different mediums, but also how enjoyable and powerful language is," she noted. "Writing this story, in particular, will help me to empathize with 10- to 14-year-olds as I have considered the challenges they may face and incorporated them into the book."

Goode hopes to publish her novel and will be working on her second draft in the coming year. In the meantime, she plans to present excerpts from her draft during her 2022 Spring Semester at Gardner-Webb.

She values her experience in the Undergraduate Research Program, because it gave her time to learn from those who are wiser and more experienced. “The research program is an opportunity to take what you are most passionate about or interested in and explore it in great depth,” Goode shared. “It is a chance to discover more about yourself and how you will fit into a community.”

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