

ALUMNI

Scholarships Helped First-Generation Student Earn Degree at Gardner-Webb Ready for Dental School

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON MARCH 15, 2023



Gifts on Double Dawg Day, April 20, will Support More Students Like Ulises Martinez, '22

Being the first in his family to graduate from college, Ulises Martinez, of Hendersonville, N.C., represents more than six decades of hard work and hope. His grandfather came to America from Mexico in the 1960s in search of seasonal work to support his family. Then, his father and uncle arrived in the 1980s with a dream to establish a permanent home in the United States that eventually became a reality.

Martinez excelled in school and received scholarships to Gardner-Webb University. He earned his degree in biology with a biomedical sciences concentration in 2022. Not long after, he and his family celebrated another milestone. Martinez was accepted into the Adams School of Dentistry at UNC-Chapel Hill.

“Being the first one in my family to go to college and now getting into dental school means more than I can put into words,” Martinez reflected. “Seeing and hearing about all the sacrifices my parents made throughout their lives for me and my siblings has always weighed heavy on my mind ever since I was a kid. As I grew up, all I wanted to do was make my parents proud and make sure that the sacrifices they made to give me opportunities were not in vain.”

He continued, “Both of my parents are from a very small rural town in Mexico and both have seven siblings. Both my dad and my grandpa came to the U.S. in search of opportunities to support their families, and I am forever grateful for their decision to do so.”

After graduating from an early college high school with an associate degree, Martinez wanted to attend Gardner-Webb. The financial aid he received made it possible. “Paying for college without going into debt was extremely important to me,” he affirmed. “I would like to thank all of the generous donors who have contributed to making my dreams a reality. Your generosity truly changed my life and continues to change the lives of many others. I am truly grateful for your decision to donate to Gardner-Webb, and I will always remember what you have done for me and my family.”

Donors have an opportunity to help provide more scholarships for students like Martinez on Double Dawg Day, April 20. On this annual day of giving, donors can take advantage of matching opportunities that could double the impact of their giving.

Martinez chose GWU because with the smaller class sizes, he would have the opportunity to connect and engage with his classmates and professors. Martinez said his professors invested time into his success as a student. “They made sure to include me, and they always seemed to genuinely care about me and the other students both inside and outside the classroom,” he explained. “When it came time to ask for letters of recommendation, Ms. (Stacie) Smith and Dr. (Ben) Brooks were more than willing to help me. I have no doubt that any of my other professors would have been willing to do the same.”

Martinez decided on a career in dentistry because he likes learning about human biology and working with his hands. “After my shadowing experience, I realized the unique impact on people’s lives that a career in dentistry would allow me to have,” he affirmed. “As a dentist, I would build meaningful relationships with people while helping them build confidence in themselves through the procedures that I would perform and the conversations that I would have with them. Having a career that combines some of my interests while also allowing me to help others and build lasting relationships is an incredible opportunity.”

He shared that his classes provided an academic foundation for dental school, and his professors cultivated an environment for collaboration by assigning team projects. “The faculty and students that I talked to at the schools where I interviewed spoke a lot about how important it was to be able to collaborate with others and be a good team member and team leader if needed,” Martinez stated. “Not only was I able to talk about some of my collaborative experiences in my interviews, but I now have a mindset that will allow me to work well in groups which will benefit me greatly.”

Martinez concluded, “I know that the experiences and professors I had at Gardner-Webb have prepared me well for the inevitable challenges that I will face. And, with the immense support that I have from my family, friends, and former professors, I am confident that I will be able to achieve my dreams and make my family proud.”

Double Dawg Day

In addition to supporting scholarships through the Annual Fund, donors can also choose the people, programs and causes they want to support across the GWU campus. Some other options include:

- University Priority Fund, which supports the greatest needs of the University.
- School/College Priority Fund, which provides the dean with the ability to respond quickly to emerging opportunities, transform the student experience and strengthen operational capacity.
- The University's 22 athletic sports teams.

Individuals can also sign up to be a Social Media Ambassadors and share their love for Gardner-Webb on all of their social media channels. Register [here](https://doubledawgday.gardner-webb.edu/giving-day/66935) (<https://doubledawgday.gardner-webb.edu/giving-day/66935>) by March 30 to be an ambassador and receive an ambassador kit in the mail. By using #DoubleDawgDay, individuals can show their support and promote the day of giving. For more information, visit the [FAQ](https://doubledawgday.gardner-webb.edu/giving-day/66935/faq) (<https://doubledawgday.gardner-webb.edu/giving-day/66935/faq>) page.



Learn more about GWU's Biology and Biochemistry Programs.

Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina's recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to nine colleges and schools, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty. Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at [Gardner-Webb.edu](https://gardner-webb.edu/) (<https://gardner-webb.edu/>).

