

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Gardner-Webb Students Shine at National Alpha Chi Convention

BY GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY ON APRIL 5, 2023

Scholars Bring Home \$12,700 in Scholarships and Prize Money

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb University students brought home \$12,700 in scholarships and prize money from the national Alpha Chi convention in Albuquerque, N.M., March 30-April 1. The convention is an annual celebration of academic scholarship bringing together Alpha Chi chapters from across the country to share research, network with other scholars, engage with keynote speakers, and earn recognition for academic and creative accomplishments.



Gardner-Webb placed second in the national Collaborative Team Research competition for “The Environmental Impact of Food Waste at Gardner-Webb University: A Proposal for Change.” Team members included Delaney Willette, Alexandra Haasser, Trevor Wyatt, Alyssa Church, and Anna Yeater. The project required months-long preparation and research, and it culminated with a collaborative research paper, academic poster, and a public presentation. The team received a \$2,500 award for their efforts.

“Students willing to present their work at the Alpha Chi convention or compete for scholarships go beyond the basic membership requirements of being juniors or seniors who place in the top 10% of their classes in terms of GPA,” noted Alpha Chi Advisor, Dr. June Hadden Hobbs, professor of English and director of undergraduate research. “They have the commitment required to complete a significant scholarly project, and they understand that Alpha Chi is about more than making good grades. It’s also about ‘making scholarship effective for good,’ as our motto proclaims. I could not be prouder of these students!” Hobbs added.

Several other GWU students were recognized. Michelle Lominac and Micah Moulder were each awarded \$2,000 Nolle Scholarships for their essays. In addition, Allyson Butts won a presentation prize for the best paper in the division of Exercise Science and Nutrition. Paula Harvie also presented work on Peronism in a novel by Argentine author Julio Cortáez.

“This year’s strong performance by GWU students in Albuquerque is truly impressive, and it speaks directly to the high quality of our academic programs and to the character of our undergraduates,” praised Gardner-Webb President Dr. William M. Downs. “Going toe-to-toe with peers from around the nation in some rigorous scholarly competition is a signature experience for our Alpha Chi members, and we should all be grateful to Dr. Hobbs for inspiring students to reach these new heights of achievement.”

Gardner-Webb alumnus and current Wake Forest University graduate student and Ph.D. candidate Damian Hutchins was awarded the highest honor given by Alpha Chi, the \$6,000 Pryor Fellowship, for his work on cancer research. Hutchins, a student in the Integrative Physiology and Pharmacology program, is working on a cure for cancer that involves circulating a patient’s blood through a biopsied tumor and lymph node cells to activate T cells designed to eradicate a patient’s cancer. The Pryor Fellowship is awarded annually to only one Alpha Chi member nationally. The recipient must be a student in a doctoral program who has completed at least two years of graduate or professional study beyond the baccalaureate degree.

This year, over 150 student presentations spanning a variety of academic fields were presented at the convention, and the keynote speaker was Dr. Lyla June Johnston, Indigenous poet, musician, scholar, and community organizer of Diné (Navajo), Tsétsêhéstâhese (Cheyenne) and European lineages. A featured TED Talks speaker, her messages focus on Indigenous rights, supporting youth, traditional land stewardship practices and healing inter-generational and inter-cultural trauma.

Gardner-Webb Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Karen Aubrey echoed congratulations and the importance of research. “Their multiple recognitions of excellence are a powerful statement about the importance of undergraduate research for our students. My hope is that we continue to grow our undergraduate research efforts to bring benefits to even more students across campus.”

Alpha Chi (<https://alphachihonor.org/>). National College Honor Society was founded in 1922 to recognize and promote academic excellence among college and university students of all disciplines, to encourage a spirit of service and leadership, and to nurture the elements of character that make scholarship effective for good. With some 300 chapters, located in almost every state, the organization inducts approximately 10,000 members annually.

Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina's recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to six professional schools, 14 academic departments, 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/>).

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