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GWU alumni finds success in the film and marketing industries



“Gardner-Webb is just family. It’s one of those places where the people you meet, you kind of stay connected with forever.” – Christian Jessup

Boiling Springs, North Carolina native and Gardner-Webb University Class of 2018 graduate Christian Jessup has always found special ways to channel his passions for music and film into various projects at different points in his life. As a double major in music composition and communications studies, Jessup received multiple national awards from Alpha Chi Honor Society during his time at GWU, participated in a summer internship with Hans Zimmer’s company Remote Control Productions in Santa Monica, California, and earned

the 2018 Outstanding Male Graduate honor. Shortly after graduating, Jessup made his way to Raleigh as an employee with Vision Point Marketing. This connection to Vision Point stretches back to a moment with Alpha Chi during his undergraduate studies.

“I went with Gardner Webb’s Alpha Chi program to the national conference, and I won several national awards while I was there,” Jessup said. “Because I won those awards, Vision Point was actually there on behalf of Alpha Chi interviewing winners about their projects. The person I interviewed with, Matt Walters, was a Gardner-Webb graduate. After the interview, Matt just kind of threw out there as a final line: ‘You’re a great speaker. If you’re ever interested in working more in higher ed or in marketing, you should contact us after you graduate.’ And I did. And here I am today.”

Vision Point develops videos, radio spots, and social media ads specifically for colleges throughout the country. As a project manager at Vision Point, Jessup is responsible for interacting with clients and the internal team to make sure that projects run in a smooth, timely manner. He also occasionally composes music for video and radio advertisements.

Vision Point recently produced an ad for the Alabama Community College System that used Jessup’s music.

“I was really proud of that one. We had a good, strong message on it,” Jessup said. “We’d planned earlier in [2020] to use that ad at Alabama football games, but because of Covid, Alabama football wasn’t really happening like we thought. And so, they were like, ‘well, we can put it up in basketball games instead.’ And then the Alabama basketball team ended up being a number two seed in the NCAA tournament, so that ad got a lot of good exposure.”

ACCS Animated Ad



As for his own personal filmmaking projects outside of Vision Point, it took Jessup a couple years to get to the point of meeting new people for collaborative creative efforts.

“I think the hardest part after graduating was making those connections,” Jessup said. “It’s really hard for anyone to establish connections and develop relationships with filmmakers that are going to involve you in their projects – to find the right people to work with, where you feel good about their work, and they feel good about your work.”

His first major filmmaking project was the feature-length documentary, “The Dancin’ Bulldogs: A 16 Seed’s Journey to the NCAA Tournament.” This story chronicles the 2018-2019 season of the Gardner-Webb men’s basketball team in their first trip to the national tournament in school history.

“I directed that one myself because I was looking for an opportunity to work,” Jessup said. “It was a great chance both to grow as a composer, but also to grow as a filmmaker in my directorial debut. I worked with Gardner-Webb alums Eli Hardin and Brendan Boylan, and a Gardner-Webb student, Thomas Manning.”

“The Dancin’ Bulldogs” has been selected to multiple film festivals in North Carolina, and has also garnered a couple of monthly honors from the IndieEye Film Awards (Best Documentary Feature and Best Original Music).

The Dancin' Bulldogs: A 16 Seed's Journey to the NCAA Tournament | Full-...



"I was really happy with the reception in the Gardner-Webb community, but also happy with the people that aren't associated with Gardner-Webb that have reacted strongly to it. And that's already opened other doors for other documentaries and sports films I've gotten to work on. It's cool to see how these little opportunities that show up make a pathway for others," Jessup said.

The success of "The Dancin' Bulldogs" caught the attention of another sports documentary filmmaker on YouTube, Trice High, who reached out to Jessup seeking his musical talent. Over the course of 2021, Jessup has composed music for a handful of High's films, notably "Farewell: A Kobe Bryant Documentary" and "Be Legendary: A Devin Booker Documentary," which have accumulated YouTube viewership numbers of 355,000 and 655,000, respectively, to-date.

Farewell: A Kobe Bryant Documentary



Looking back to his time at GWU, Jessup recalls the impact of mentors and professors that instilled him with the confidence and skills to pursue many of these creative ventures.

“In the music department, Dr. Bruce Moser and Dr. Matt Whitfield were two really good influences on me,” Jessup said. “They saw the talent I had, but they wanted to push me beyond that almost. They encouraged me to write all the time. At one point, they had me writing a new piece of music once a week, which was insane to try and get done. But, it made me a better composer. Even though there were some weeks where the music turned out terrible, to write something that frequently really made me better as a writer.”

“And then in the communications department, Dr. Jim Lawrence, who’s retired now, was a really big influence as well. He gave me opportunities, he saw the talents, and he saw the connection with the music department. Whether it was projects Gardner-Webb was working on, or whether it was his own personal projects, he was always pulling me in to write music – teaching me how to edit, how to sound mix, that sort of thing. He was really good at bridging the gap between my music degree and the communications degree,” Jessup said.

Even though he grew up in Boiling Springs, Jessup initially took many options into consideration when looking at schools.

“Going to college, I was trying to really objectively look at my options, and not look at in terms of distance, or what’s close, what’s far. Just looking at it, Gardner-Webb had the degrees I wanted. I felt a real connection with the people that worked there. And so, I really felt like that’s where I should be,” Jessup said.

Jessup's parents, Tracy and Teresa, are both GWU alumni as well. His father, Dr. Tracy Jessup, serves as the Vice President for Christian Life and Service Senior Minister to the University.

"My dad being an employee at Gardner-Webb had an impact on me from the time I was born," (Christian) Jessup said. "There are photos of my parents and me as a toddler on campus. And to grow up with a great influence like my dad, and seeing him in the higher education field, probably influenced both my college choice and my career choice, now working in higher education. And so that's a pretty cool thing that I got to go to college where he works. And then ultimately, he got to be the one that handed me my degree when I walked across the stage at graduation."

Jessup currently resides in Raleigh with his wife, Megan, a GWU Class of 2019 graduate. Megan is also from Boiling Springs. They met at Crest High School, before both advancing on to GWU a year apart from one another.

"Those years we spent together at Gardner-Webb really forged our relationship and started off a good marriage," Jessup said.

With all this in mind, it is easy to see why Jessup specifically describes Gardner-Webb as "family." Although his horizons have expanded outward beyond Boiling Springs, the roots of this campus and town continue to be a large part of who he is.