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Graduate Profile: The Benefit of a Close Cohort

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2021

Graduate Profile: The Benefit of a Close Cohort

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You have worked hard to be here, and you deserve to be here. Never forget what you are working towards.

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Jordan Willhoit transferred to [Governors State University](#) for its highly esteemed [Master of Occupational Therapy](#) program. What she didn't expect was the supportive cohort and professors that reminded her everyday of why her hard work was worth it. Now graduating as a leader,

advocate, and researcher in the occupational therapy world, Willhoit is ready to serve others.

GSU Newsroom: Why did you choose GSU?

Willhoit: From the very start of my bachelor's education at Ball State University in Indiana, I knew that I wanted to pursue a master's degree in occupational therapy. I began researching universities with occupational therapy programs my sophomore year of undergrad and researched and priced out around thirty different programs. Choosing Governors State was an opportunity that allowed me to live at home close to my family and friends while pursuing my dreams in a well-established program that had values that aligned with my own: prepare students to become practitioners that become leaders, advocates, and researchers in the occupational therapy world.

GSU Newsroom: What are some of the highlights from your time at GSU?

Willhoit: The greatest part of my experience at GSU has been the friendships formed with those in my cohort. One of the many assets that the GSU OT program offers is the small cohort sizes. Our cohort of 27 has always been the first to support one another. Whether it is sharing study resources (shout out to Quizlet!), cheering one another on during a difficult class, or de-stressing together on the weekends. I am excited to continue supporting and cheering on my classmates as we all begin the next step of finding our place in the world of OT as practitioners.

GSU Newsroom: Which professors helped shape your experience and your future?

Willhoit: At the beginning of the OT program, we start our graduate education in a rigorous summer anatomy course. A class that challenges every student, starting us off at a full sprint. It was during this first semester that we first met Professor Patti Kalvelage. She would often start each class asking how we are doing. Sensing the stress and seeing the sleep deprivation on our faces and she would remind us why we were working so hard and why this hard work was going to make us better occupational therapists. In each course taken with Patti, she creates a relaxed, self-directed learning environment that allows conversation and the exchange of ideas and perspectives to flow freely and frequently.

Another professor who shaped my experience at GSU who is a recent addition to the program team is Dr. Frank Czuba. While my cohort and I only had Dr. Czuba for a short time, Dr. Czuba's positive attitude, humor, and energizing teaching style was always a course to look forward too. In addition to being a great professor, Dr. Czuba is always the first to say "Hello!" He makes time to stop and connect with students, and is quick to provide words of encouragement and affirmation. Dr. Czuba has shared with us the power of connection, the strength that our words can bring to others, and I intend to bring those skills and mindset with me into my own practice as a clinician.

GSU Newsroom: What's next after graduation?

Willhoit: After graduation, I plan on spending much needed time with my family, friends and fiancé. While finishing this program is a huge accomplishment, I absolutely could

not have done it without their unending support they provided me during these past three years. As excited as I am to relax and celebrate with those I love, and I am equally as eager to continue this momentum and start my career as an occupational therapist! I have been fortunate to learn so much from great mentors and clinicians during my fieldwork experiences, my heart is not set on just one practice setting, I have enjoyed them all! I feel confident that I will find a job that enhances and broadens my skill-set while allowing me to serve others, whether it be serving children or adults. I am looking forward to what comes next for I know the best is yet to be.

GSU Newsroom: What advice would you give GSU students?

Willhoit: My advice to GSU students is to enjoy this journey and opportunity. You have worked hard to be here, and you deserve to be here. Never forget what you are working towards. And as I mentioned before, finding your support system on campus makes all the difference in your experience. Help one another complete each milestone, pass each test, and don't forget to celebrate together when you do!