

*Catalyst Profile*  
**Salvatore Lettieri**

Salvatore Lettieri is a Western Carolina University 1983 alumnus who pursued a dual bachelor's degree in chemistry and mathematics and was named the Outstanding Senior in each department. He was also an outstanding student in French and served as a teaching assistant in the intensive French curriculum. Lettieri remembers fondly the support and time he was given by many of his professors at WCU.

“He simply had no academic weaknesses,” said Royce Woosley, a former head of chemistry department at WCU, also noting that his Physics professor told him that Sal was the best student in his class.

After obtaining his bachelor's degree at WCU, Lettieri spent one year at Western as a graduate assistant in with the chemistry department and has since been recognized as an outstanding graduate from that department. For some period of time, he considered the option of going to dental school, but then decided to go to Bowman Grey School of Medicine to obtain a medical degree and build a career in medicine. “His medical career has been equally as successful as his undergraduate achievements,” said Woosley.

Dr. Lettieri became one of the best reconstructive surgeons in the Mayo Hospital system, and now he shares his experience with students at Mayo Clinic College of Medicine in Arizona as a professor assistant of plastic surgery. Dr. Lettieri believes that teaching is a big part of his life as it was instilled by his professors at WCU. With the years of experience in trauma reconstruction, Dr. Lettieri found out that “fewer and fewer plastic surgeons are willing to do trauma reconstruction exclusively.” His practice also includes burn and cancer reconstruction in addition to trauma.

Dr. Lettieri gives a great deal of credit for his success to his single mother who raised him in Haywood County after his father's death at the age of 39. His parents were Italian immigrants who moved to Long Island after spending time in Canada. He said that his mother, who is now 76, sacrificed a great deal and provided him with the support he needed.