

Catalyst Profile
Amanda Buchanan-Gambill

After heading off to North Carolina State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, Amanda Buchanan-Gambill, who graduated in 2006 from WCU, has returned to her home in Cherokee County with the hope of serving both the people and animals of the mountains.

As a relief veterinarian, Buchanan-Gambill fills in for doctors at veterinary clinics across Western North Carolina and Northern Georgia. While performing this unique service was intimidating at first, the concept has catalyzed her professional career.

"I've been able to experience so many different types of medicine and clientele," said Buchanan-Gambill. "Every day I'm faced with a unique set of challenges in potentially unfamiliar settings."

Though her sights are now set on owning a veterinary practice, less than a decade ago, Buchanan-Gambill, a first-generation college student, was working toward her pre-professional degree at WCU.

As a member of the Honors College, this Andrews native poured herself into academics. She spent time conducting research in Sean O'Connell's microbiology lab and even dedicated a summer to researching elk at the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

A position working for the Educational Talent Search, an organization designed to help low-income and first-generation students prepare for college, was also integral to Buchanan-Gambill's educational experience. Her boss, Todd Murdock, acted as both a mentor and "dear friend."

"The staff was always very supportive of my goals and my coursework," said Buchanan-Gambill. "They were always understanding of my rigorous schedule yet allotted plenty of opportunities for me to feel like a real member of their team."

Susan Smith, an advisor in the Honors College, was also "helpful in aligning coursework." During Buchanan-Gambill's four-year stay in the Whee, Smith spent hours mulling over veterinary school applications, standardized test requirements, and personal statements.

"She dedicated time to my goals, and I will forever be thankful for her service," said Buchanan-Gambill. "I would suggest using all the resources that are afforded to you."

After graduating from WCU and heading off to pursue a doctorate at North Carolina State University, Buchanan-Gambill practiced mixed animal medicine for four years at places such as the Cherokee Animal Care Clinic. Now, she approaches veterinary medicine differently from Swain County, North Carolina to Hiawassee, Georgia .

“My career is still young,” said Buchanan-Gambill. “There aren’t a lot of options like this in the area I serve, but I believe this experience will allow me to be a better doctor.”