

Green Takes Education to Heart

A young man with crew-cut hair and a crisp red polo sits in Fretwell Café, contemplating the size and contours of his fist. This is the average size of a human heart, he explains, but Lance Armstrong's is probably larger due to his intense athleticism. He says simply, "I just love the human heart." This man is Spencer Green, and he brings this passion to his studies in UNC Charlotte's Master of Science in Kinesiology program. He's following the Clinical Exercise Physiology track.



Spencer Green poses next to a Biodex Isokinetic Dynamometer. Researchers can use this machine to assess a patient's knee strength.

A recipient of the 2016-2017 Herschel and Cornelia Everett Foundation Fellowship, Green is one of two to receive the prestigious fellowship granted this year. Requiring an undergraduate GPA of 3.5 or higher and the recommendation of several professors, the Everett Fellowship covers tuition plus stipend for the first year of his program. He will receive a graduate assistantship during his second year. The Everett Fellowship is supported by the Herschel and Cornelia Everett Foundation.

"Receiving that fellowship was something I never thought I could do," Green said. Diagnosed with dyslexia when he was just eight, Green struggled in school and grew to dislike it at times. After high school graduation in 2008, he felt directionless and decided to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps. Green signed a 6-year contract, and he began a journey that would lead him to a passion for serving others.



Green researches Kinesiology with an emphasis on Clinical Exercise Physiology in a Cameron computer lab.

Green served in Afghanistan in 2010 and Morocco a year later. Soon, he transferred to the Reserves and rose to the rank of sergeant. He entered UNC Charlotte in 2014 after earning his associate's degree from Central Piedmont Community College. During a class in exercise physiology his junior year, he realized he wanted to study the impact of exercise on the human heart, specifically as it relates to high blood pressure.

As a senior in the Kinesiology program, Green served as a clinical intern at Novant Health. During this time, he studied cardiovascular, pulmonary, and cancer rehabilitation, and he worked with patients with high blood pressure. This inspired Green to pursue research into the progress of cardiac and pulmonary patients during the rehabilitation process.

"Exercise *is* medicine," Green says, and he hopes to educate others to see it that way. His experience at Novant was a large part of what drove Green to transition out of the Marine Corps and into his current status as a graduate student. He recently received his honorable discharge, and he is looking forward to focusing entirely on his master's degree. He attributes his success in the program so far to UNC Charlotte's ability to foster close student-professor relationships. His Graduate Program Director, Dr. Susan Arthur, points to Green's own achievements. "The Department of Kinesiology is so proud of Spencer's accomplishments including his military service to our country and his stellar academic successes," Arthur says. "His compassion for others and his enthusiasm for the field of Clinical Exercise Physiology will one day make him a leader in this career field."

Green had a positive experience with the Kinesiology undergraduate program. In May 2016, he graduated with honors and received awards for "Academic Excellence" and "Overall Dedication and Perseverance." One of Green's fondest memories at UNC Charlotte was participating in the Southeast American College of Sports Medicine quiz bowl; his team came in second place last year.



Green demonstrating how researchers can set the Biodex Isokinetic Dynamometer to extend a patient's knee joints through a range of motion at a specific velocity.

Being a veteran has offered Green many unique opportunities, including participating in Toys for Tots and the Wounded Warrior Project. He has also spoken with other veterans at the veterans lounge on campus, a resource he highly recommends. The Veteran Services Office, located in Barnard 103, works to create a smooth transition for veterans seeking an education at UNC Charlotte.

Mary Ellen Shuntich, Director of External Relations at the Graduate School, adds, "As a military veteran, Spencer brings special dedication and leadership abilities as an Everett Fellow this year." Green's veteran status has also allowed him to gain a unique perspective on life as a student. He advises fellow veterans to be patient, to use their resources on campus, and – something that has worked well for him –

“Let your professors know who you are.” He makes it a point to develop a strong professional relationship with his teachers.

From the Marine Corps to the classroom, Green has ceaselessly striven to serve others. After the passing of a fellow Marine, Green was contacted by his friend’s mother, who said that her son lived on through Green. “It kind of made me wake up,” Green said. He realized then that he wanted to work to enhance others’ quality of life. “That’s my big goal in life. I want to make people’s lives better.”

*Contributed by Melody Vaughn
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