

## Student Profile

In spite of the myriad of mental, physical, and technological distractions that perpetually surround her, Gwyneth Howerton wholly directs her energy towards the schoolwork laid out in front of her seated form as she twists and turns, almost imperceptibly, in her worn-out desk chair.

Ever the dedicated student, Gwyneth checks off yet another task from her Wednesday to-do list - a reading response for her cognitive psychology class - and moves one step further down a path she hopes will eventually lead to a successful career in clinical psychology.

At twenty years old, Gwyneth begins her fifth semester at North Carolina State University. As she works with consistency and conviction, her ultimate goal is clear: tackle and treat the complex psychological dilemmas that plague society at large on an intimate and individual level through research and counsel. Evident in her dedication and anticipation is an earnest desire to promote beneficial change and understanding within a realm that may otherwise be both individually and socially neglected.

While Gwyneth's inclination towards problem-solving is a perennial one, her desired career path and life goals remain far less indelible. Prior to her current pursuit of clinical psychology, Gwyneth entertained careers in fields such as forensic psychology and general medicine. On a Pre-Med track throughout her freshman and sophomore years, this semester Gwyneth ultimately decided to drop Pre-Med to major in psychology with a minor in political science.

As the interview continues, a previously imperceptible air of uncertainty becomes apparent. The student conveys a sentiment of relative unease in regards to herself as well as the state of the unstable outside world. Mentions of politics, polarization, and pandemics weave their way into the conversation as Gwyneth succinctly articulates her perception of an unstable world with a scope wide enough to not only inspire her ambitions but also obfuscate and diminish them.

When asked how she manages this contradictory internal amalgamation of ambition and uncertainty, Gwyneth states the following,

“For the most part, I find that staying on top of the things I can control helps me deal with the external uncertainty. Things like lists, planners...anything that helps me assess and evaluate so that I can make solid decisions. I know that the world is constantly changing and that's ultimately a good thing even if it is confusing sometimes. As for internal uncertainty? I'm not so sure how to completely manage that one yet. I would assume through time and experience, probably.”

The student's older half-sister and mentor of sorts, Amanda Herring, only has favorable things to say about her sister and reaffirms the student's ability to promote change in her desired career path. Though the two sisters are separated by states, Amanda proves herself a worthy advisor on all accounts and stays in regular contact with Gwyneth through FaceTime and yearly visits.

As a result of the eighteen year age difference between the two, the student's sister feels the need to offer some guidance and perspective as it relates to aforementioned uncertainty, even from her residence 2,500 miles away in Sunset Beach, CA. With clarity and perspective, Amanda asserts the following,

“Uncertainty is inevitable. What really matters is how you deal with it and to not let yourself be paralyzed by it. To be comfortable with this uncertainty is to allow yourself the freedom to make something of yourself on your own terms and not hold yourself back waiting for the perfect circumstances that will never arrive.”

Gwyneth's internal struggle between ambition and uncertainty presents itself at various points during the interview. One moment, she excitedly mentions future internship prospects and her desire to help others through psychology only to then voice her doubts as to how she can truly be sure these things are really what she wants. As she details the contradictory ways in which she envisions her future, a broader narrative emerges. A broader narrative that suggests a deep desire to alleviate societal pain but an uncertainty as to how exactly to achieve this goal in a meaningful way.

When confronted with this narrative, Gwyneth clarifies her case and motives, as she does not want to overshadow her intellect and drive with what she considers, “a perfectly natural amount of career insecurity and unease for a 20-year-old.” She asserts that, while she certainly has her doubts in regard to her future and no shortage of concern in regard to the disarray she observes in the world around her, she is aware that this is only natural and that she is confident in her ability to handle whatever life throws at her and come out the otherside with growth and dignity.

Gwyneth plans to continue her path towards a career in clinical psychology as she applies to numerous internships and summer jobs centered in the psychological field. In previous years, Gwyneth volunteered in the emergency department of WakeMed and worked as a research assistant for two different studies: one studying the effects of a specific anesthesia on patients undergoing ECT (electro-convulsion therapy), the other studying how parents who participated in a previous weight-loss management study affected their children's weight. Gwyneth currently works as a delivery driver for PostMates and she plans to study abroad in London for the upcoming spring semester. The student plans to graduate from North Carolina State University in the spring of 2022.

Both in her academic and everyday life, Gwyneth demonstrates a substantial degree of both ambition and self-awareness as it relates to her career and life goals. For this student, the seemingly ubiquitous young-adult uncertainty presents itself not as a problem which must either be solved or covered to, but rather an obstacle ripe with endless opportunity to learn and evolve from.