Ogden Scholar – Dallas McKinney

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WKU students are pushing toward the finish line with only two weeks left in the spring semester.

In this week’s View from the Hill, Amy Bingham talks to the Ogden Foundation scholar about the abrupt shift to on-line learning and how thankful he is for the many opportunities he had while attending WKU.

If it were a normal semester, senior Dallas McKinney would be spending most of his time here at EST. Tutoring students in math and science and finishing up his double major in meteorology and geographic information system. But instead he’s home in Mayfield Kentucky, trying to make the best of an unexpected situation.

 “I mean It has been disappointing not being able to reconnect with your classmates. You leave for spring break and not really able to come back.”

It may not be ending the way he expected but Dallas McKinney also never expected to be awarded the university’s highest academic honor.

 “No way, no way. I came here to be a meteorologist and hopefully work for the Weather Service, but it’s just become so much more.”

Dallas says he his fascination with weather dates back to when he was little.

 “I think my parents picked that up early. I started watching the weather channel instead of wanting to watch cartoons.”

Hurricane Katrina in 2005 also made a big impact on him. Once he got to WKU, his passion for research really took off.

 “My first summer at Western I did the NASA student airborne research program in Southern California where I actually rode on a research aircraft, collected data.”

His love of making maps came in handy the next summer during an internship with the Weather Service in Cleveland.

 “I was also able to create a product they were able to use last winter to more accurately predict lake effect snow.”

McKinney has made his mark in another way, helping create a scholarship for first generation college students.

 “I’m a first generation student myself, when I was serving in SGA we were looking for ways to benefit the student body.”

McKinney says if he could leave the student body with one bit of advice it would be this.

 “Don’t let anything stop you, not even corona virus.”

McKinney, who plans to pursue his masters degree in Utah, hopes to be able to participate in WKU’s rescheduled commencement this fall which is tentatively planned for the weekend of September 19th.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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