

*Catalyst Profile*  
**Jeremy Finison**

Jeremy Finison, who graduated from WCU in 2001, has research and development down to a science. Since joining Ecolab Kay Chemical Company, a global leader in water, sanitation and energy technologies, this WCU grad has become responsible for product platforms generating more than \$150 million in annual revenue. He has also been granted two U.S. trade secrets, a patent, several patents pending, other records of invention and “various company awards.”

Still, despite Finison’s success at the Greensboro, North Carolina lab, his foundation in anything from polymer chemistry to surfactants began in the classrooms of the Natural Sciences Building. This former chemistry major found his way in courses such as “CHEM 361: Principles of Biochemistry” and “CHEM 370: Instrumental Analysis I.”

Academic advisor Gary Pool also guided the burgeoning scientist, helping him understand what all was possible with a chemistry degree, beyond pre-med. Close-knit classes allowed for a “great one-on-one” feeling with instructors, both in lectures and labs.

“While WCU has grown by leaps and bounds since I graduated, that ‘small town’ mindset is still valued,” said Finison. “Professors care that you understand the basic concepts. You get to know them, and they know your name.”

Though four years in the Whee supplied real world experience, nothing could fully prepare him for “life in this industry.” As such, after walking across the Ramsey Center stage, Finison worked for three years at a toll manufacturing plant in High Point, North Carolina. There, he conducted chemical blending, organic synthesizing, process engineering, and quantitative analyses.

In 2004, he took a job as a product development chemist with his current employer, Ecolab. Since then, Finison has created end-use cleaning and sanitization products and led project teams. From 2013 to 2014, he managed the summer intern program, refining his supervision skills. He also served as a quantitative analysis lab supervisor for two years, though he quickly realized that his “heart was in research and development.”

Now, the former Catamount leads cross-functional, cross-divisional, and cross-regional teams in just that—“R & D.” And in 2013, he returned to campus to speak with the chemistry club in hopes of shedding light on his professional endeavors.

“I tell folks that you do not have to go to some enormous university to get a great education,” said Finison. “You just have to understand that you are not entitled to anything just because you have a degree or letters after your name. Nothing is owed to you; you must work hard.”